国外翻译研究丛书之九

# LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

## *Contexts in Translating*

# 语言与文化

## ——翻译中的语境

Eugene A. Nida




上海外语教育出版社

SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS

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本书由三个部分组成：一是作者1993年在我社出版的*Language, Culture and Translating*一书的修订版；二是根据作者1999年在我国10余所著名外语院校巡回讲学的讲稿整理而成的*Contexts in Translating*；三是作者近几年同我国记者、专家和朋友的部分谈话或通信。在这部新著中，奈达博士从不同侧面分析了语言与文化的密切联系，并进而从语境角度论述怎样处理翻译中的种种关系和问题。此外，他还在科学与艺术、理论与实践以及改革翻译教学等问题上阐明或重申了自己的观点。

尤金·奈达（1914—）：美国语言学家、翻译家和翻译理论家。1943年获语言学博士学位，然后长期在美国圣经学会主持翻译部的工作。先后访问过90个国家和地区，并著书立说，单独或合作出版了40多部书，发表论文250余篇，是世界译坛的一位长青学者。


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# 出 版 说 明

近年来,国内翻译研究取得了很大进展,有关翻译研究的丛书也出了多套。不过,长期以来,国内引进的原版翻译著作匮乏,不少研究都是根据二手资料;另外,学习翻译专业的研究生人数越来越多,这种状况若继续存在,将十分不利于学科的发展和翻译人才的培养。鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社约请了多名国内翻译研究著名学者分别开列出最值得引进的国外翻译研究论著的书目,并对这些书目进行整理、排序,最终确定了准备引进的正式书单。该丛书涉及的论著时间跨度大,既有经典,也有新论;内容的覆盖面也相当广泛,既有翻译本体的研究,也有跨学科的研究。这套丛书的引进将会满足翻译专业研究生教学原版参考书和翻译理论研究的需要。

上海外语教育出版社谨以此丛书献给我国的翻译学界。

# “国外翻译研究丛书”专家委员会

# 借鉴和创造
# （代序）

上海外语教育出版社从成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次（尤其本科与研究生层次）的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书，而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作，比如"现代语言学丛书"、"牛津应用语言学丛书"、"美国文学史论译丛"、"外国文学史丛书"、"剑桥文学指南丛书"、"当代英语语言学丛书"以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要，还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求，对比语言学和翻译学近些年来在我国有了较快的发展，最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多，而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系（当然还太少）。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象，因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和新学科建设的需要，不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集，最近又推

出了原版“国外翻译研究丛书”，这套丛书时间跨度从古代到现代，所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著，堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版，以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难，真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼，为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究；二是对外国译学的借鉴性研究；三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这三者研究深入并结合好了，才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究，改革开放以来，在我国已取得了很显著的成就，这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于 20 世纪 80 年代末有了独立学科的初级形态，90 年代又有了新的发展，对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探讨。依照学科建设的规律和研究现状，我们尚需在上述三个方面加大研究力度，而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个角度讲，这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之一。

在新的世纪，文化（包括各类科学技术）会多方面快速深入人类的日常生活，各国之间的交流会空前深广，因此翻译的功能会逐步扩大，实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外，还应十分重视实用性人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

杨自俭

青岛海洋大学六三居室

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# 出 版 前 言

著名语言学家、翻译家和翻译理论家尤金·奈达博士于 1914 年 11 月 11 日生于美国俄克拉何马市，1943 年获密歇根大学语言学博士学位，接着长期在美国圣经学会主持翻译部的工作，1980 年退休后任顾问。

奈达博士在美国和世界翻译界都有广泛的影响，是一位备受推崇的"长青学者"(evergreen scholar)。这位学者具有两个方面的特点：

第一、理论和实践相结合。他先后访问过近 90 个国家和地区，进行翻译讲座，培训翻译人员，参加翻译学术研讨活动，指导翻译实践与翻译教学，具有丰富的理论素养和实际经验。他单独与合作出版了 40 多部书，发表论文 250 余篇。在有关翻译是技术/艺术还是科学的问题上，他在本书的序言中重申了自己的观点，表明了他在理论与实践关系上的正确立场。

第二、虚心学习，不断进取。尽管 87 岁高龄，但奈达博士老骥伏枥，仍继续坚持研究、写作和外出讲学或参加学术会议，忙得不亦乐乎。有的人退休后患"退休综合症"，他却说："我要是早退休 15 年才好！"奈达博士特别喜欢他的读者或听众向他提问，欢迎批评或建议，不因为自己是知名学者就固执己见。这一点在本书中也有所反映。

总的看来，奈达博士的翻译研究途径表现出从语言学到社会语言学的特点，大体上可以分为三个时期：

从 40 年代到 60 年代初为第一个时期，重点在语言学，以分析词语和句子结构为主题，主要作品有 *Morphology: The Descriptive*

*Analysis of Words* (1946), "The analysis of grammatical constituents", *Language* (1948), *A Synopsis of English Syntax* (1960)等。

从60年代中期到70年代中期为第二个时期,重点研究"等效理论",代表作品有 *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969)等。

从80年代初到现在为第三个时期,重点是从多学科角度研究翻译,重要作品有 *Meaning Across Cultures* (1981), *Sign, Sense, and Translation* (1983), *Style and Discourse in Translating* (1983), *From One Language to Another* (1986), *Social Linguistics and Translating* (1986), *Understanding English* (1997), *The Sociolinguistics of Interlingual Communication* (1999), *Language and Culture: Contexts in Translating* (2001)等。

本书由三部分组成:一是作者1993年在我社出版的《语言、文化与翻译》(*Language, Culture and Translating*)一书的修订版;二是根据作者1999年在中国10余所著名外语院校巡回讲学的讲稿整理而成的《翻译中的语境》(*Contexts in Translating*);三是作者近几年同中国记者、专家和朋友的部分谈话或通信。在这部新著中,奈达博士从不同侧面分析了语言与文化的密切联系,并进而从语境角度论述怎样处理翻译中的种种关系和问题。此外,他还在科学与技术/艺术、理论与实践以及改进翻译教学等问题上阐明或重申了自己的观点。这些不仅对我们正确地了解和研究奈达有重要意义,对我国的整个翻译理论研究也有重要参考价值。

*To my wife*

*Maria Elena Fernández-Miranda,*

*My colleague and inspiration*



# Preface

Combining two books into one publication may seem to be a strange way of presenting readers with strategic help about one of the most crucial activities in our present world, namely, interlingual communication, traditionally divided into translating and interpreting and studied as both a skill and a science. Effective translating and interpreting from one language to another is a highly developed skill and must be learned primarily as a skill by imitating the experience of proven experts. But the activity and the resulting texts produced by translators and interpreters can and should also be studied as a science, in the same way that any human activity can be analyzed scientifically.

The present volume is a combination of two complementary and supplementary books: *Language, Culture and Translating*, published in 1993 by the Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, and *Contexts in Translating*, being published by Benjamins, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The first book focuses primarily on the details of correspondences between languages while the second tries to provide help in understanding different scientific factors in interlingual communication. There is, accordingly, some overlapping, but this should be taken as reinforcement of basic concepts and not as contradictions. In fact, it may be particularly useful to note how essentially the same language structures can be viewed from different functional perspectives.

One of the very important features of this book is the interviews and letters that highlight the issues of practice in translating and of the underlying linguistic structures that make interlingual communication possible.

Eugene A. Nida
January, 2001

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# Preface to Part One

This book on *Language, Culture, and Translating* has its origin in a series of lectures on translating given at the Shanghai International Studies University in the spring of 1989 and later that same year at the Maurice Thorez Institute of Languages and Translating in Moscow. The approach is essentially practical, although the principal theories of translating are discussed in Chapter 10.

This book has four main emphases: (1) the need to understand thoroughly the source text, (2) the close relation between language and culture, (3) the necessity to focus attention on style and discourse, and (4) the relevance of insights coming from several different disciplines.

Since a majority of failures in translating seemingly result from an inadequate understanding of the text in the source language, three chapters are given to a description of the crucial semantic and formal features of lexemes (words and idioms), syntax, and discourse. Unfortunately, many translators have only very hazy ideas about how languages are structured and how to explore the meanings of words and combinations of words.

The role of language within a culture and the influence of the culture on the meanings of words and idioms are so pervasive that scarcely any text can be adequately understood without careful consideration of its cultural background. Even though only one chapter is given to the specific subject of Language and Culture, there are constant references in other chapters to the relevance of culture both in understanding the source text and in representing the meaning in a target language-culture.

The significance of style and discourse and their role in associative (or connotative) meaning is a major concern of this book. Certain mistakes in terminology or grammar can be forgiven, but a failure to reflect the spirit and dynamic of a source document is a "mortal sin".

Many people assume that the only prerequisites for translating are a bilingual dictionary, an exhaustive encyclopedia, and an ability to speak and write two languages. But ability to translate

also depends on a number of very important insights which come directly or indirectly from several different disciplines, e.g. cultural anthropology, linguistics, psychology, communication theory, and literary analysis. It is the interdisciplinary approach to interlingual communication which contributes the major new insights for effective translating and interpreting.

In the preparation of this volume I have been greatly helped by the criticism and insights of my colleague Johannes P. Louw, and I am especially indebted to my editorial associate Karen Munson for her advice on how to make this volume more meaningful and useful.

Eugene A. Nida

New York, 1991



## Chapter 1

# Paradoxes of Translating

Translating is a complex and fascinating task. In fact, I. A. Richards (1953) has claimed that it is probably the most complex type of event in the history of the cosmos. And yet, translating is so natural and easy that children seem to have no difficulty in interpreting for their immigrant parents. These children normally do very well until they have gone to school and have learned about nouns, verbs, and adverbs. Then they often seem tongue-tied because they try to match the words and grammar rather than the content.

Because of experience in learning a foreign language in school, most persons assume that literalness in translating means faithfulness to the text, even though close, literal renderings are often seriously misleading. In English, for example, the repetition of a word usually implies emphasis, but not in Bahasa Indonesia, where repetition only signals plurality. In the Quechua dialect of Bolivia the suffix *-runa* marks the preceding noun as plural, but in conversation Quechua speakers use the suffix only at the beginning of a section and do not constantly repeat it, as is the case with the plural suffix in Spanish. Accordingly, a literal translation which represents every plural *-s* in Spanish by the Quechua suffix *-runa* is regarded by Quechua speakers as being not only strange but even an insult to the intelligence of hearers.

Because of the many discrepancies between meanings and structures of different languages, some persons have insisted that translating is impossible, and yet more and more translating is done and done well. Those who insist that translating is impossible are usually concerned with some of the more marginal features of figurative language and complex poetic structures. The use of figurative language is universal, but the precise figures of speech in one language rarely match those in another.

It is true that in some languages one cannot say "My God" , because native speakers insist that no one can "possess" God, but a person can speak about "the God I worship" or "the God to whom I belong." Translating is simply doing the impossible well, regardless of the objections of such famous authors as Goethe, Schleiemacher, and Ortega y Gasset, who insisted that translating

is impossible and yet did not hesitate to have their own writings translated (Güttinger 1963).

Another paradox of translating is reflceted in the contention that translating is valid but paraphrase is wrong. In fact, all translating involves differing degrees of paraphrase, since there is no way in which one can successfully translate word for word and structure for structure. In Spanish *me fui* is literally 'I went myself,' in which *me* is a so-called reflexive pronoun, but this Spanish phrase can often be best translated into English as 'I left right away' or 'I got away quickly.' In English, as well as in most other European languages, one speaks of the 'heart' as being the center of emotions, but in many languages in West Africa a person 'loves with the liver' and in some of the indigenous languages of Central America people talk about 'loving with the stomach.' Since languages do not differ essentially in what they can say, but in how they say it, paraphrase is inevitable. What is important is the semantic legitimacy of the paraphrase.

A further paradox occurs in the widespread view that a translator should first produce a more or less literal rendering of the source text and then proceed to improve it stylistically. Style, however, is not the frosting on the cake, but an integral part of the process of interlingual communication. It must be built into the text right from the beginning. It is usually better to aim first at a stylistically satisfactory rendering of the source text and then review it carefully to "tighten it up" by analyzing and testing the correspondences. A few errors in the correspondences of lexical meaning are much more excusable than missing the spirit and aesthetic character of the source text.

Since translating is a skill which generally requires considerable practice, most people assume that it can be taught, and to an extent this is true. But it is also true that really exceptional translators are born, not made. Potential translators must have a high level of aptitude for the creative use of language, or they are not likely to be outstanding in their profession. Perhaps the greatest benefit from instruction in translating is to become aware of one's own limitations, something which a translator of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* into Chinese should have learned. Then he would not have translated English *mule-skinner* into a Chinese phrase meaning 'a person who skins the hide off of mules.'

For many people the need for human translators seems paradoxical in this age of computers. Since modern computers can be

loaded with dictionaries and grammars, why not let computers do the work? Computers can perform certain very simple interlingual tasks, providing there is sufficient pre-editing and post-editing. But neither advertising brochures nor lyric poetry can ever be reduced to the kind of logic required for computer programs. Computer printouts of translations can often be understood, if the persons involved already know what the text is supposed to say. But the results of machine translating are usually in an unnatural form of language and sometimes just plain weird. Furthermore, real improvements will not come from merely doctoring the program or adding rules. The human brain is not only digital and analogic, but it also has a built-in system of values which gives it a componentially incalculable advantage over machines. Human translators will always be necessary for any text which is stylistically appealing and semantically complex — which includes most of what is worth communicating in another language.

The most difficult texts to translate are not, however, highly literary productions, but rather those texts which say nothing, the type of language often used by politicians and delegates to international forums. In fact, a group of professional translators at the United Nations headquarters in New York City have insisted that the most difficult text to translate is one in which the speaker or writer has attempted to say nothing. The next most difficult type of text is one filled with irony or sarcasm, since in a written text the paralinguistic clues to the meaning are usually much more difficult to detect than when someone is speaking. And perhaps the third most difficult type of text is a book or article on translating in which the illustrative examples rarely match. In fact, a book on translating almost always requires extensive adaptation.

One of the most surprising paradoxes of translating is that there is never a completely perfect or timeless translation. Both language and culture are always in the process of change. Furthermore, language is an open system with overlapping meanings and fuzzy boundaries — the bane of logicians but the delight of poets. The indeterminacy of language is part of the price that must be paid for creativity and for the new insights which come through symbolic reinterpretation of human experience.

Some people imagine that the greatest problem in translating is to find the right words and constructions in the receptor or target language. On the contrary, the most difficult task for the translator is to understand thoroughly the designative and associa-

tive meanings of the text to be translated. This involves not only knowing the meanings of the words and the syntactic relations, but also being sensitive to all the nuances of the stylistic devices. As one struggling translator summed up his problems, "If I really understood what the text means, I could easily translate it."

Perhaps the least understood paradox of translating is the general assumption that a person who knows two languages well can be a good translator or interpreter. In the first place, knowing two languages is not enough. It is also essential to be acquainted with the respective cultures — one of the important reasons for the title of this book *Language, Culture, and Translating*. Persons may be able to speak two languages perfectly but not have the capacity to write well, which means they can never become skilled translators. Moreover, merely speaking two languages in a competent manner does not mean that persons can become first-rate interpreters, whether in consecutive or simultaneous circumstances. In addition to knowing a language, an interpreter must have a quick mind to organize and formulate a response. The test for potential interpreters at the Maurice Thorez Institute in Moscow involves an assigned topic, one minute to prepare a short speech on the topic, and one minute to speak.

The least understood paradox of language is the parallax of language, that is, the fact that language not only represents reality but also distorts it. For example, people use the terms *sunset* and *sunrise* when they know full well that the sun does not actually set or rise, but that it is the world which is rotating. Similarly, people call certain large-eared seals *sea lions*, although they are in no sense lions. Even when a word is wrongly understood, many persons tend to give it credence. For example, people still cite the adage *The exception proves the rule* as a means of justifying exceptions, when *proves* should be understood only in the sense of 'testing.'

Some people think of a language as being a picture or map of reality, and they seldom take the time to realize that pictures and maps inevitably involve selectivity and distortion. Both pictures and maps suffer from parallax, but people generally get used to such skewing of reality and even have special devices for calculating the errors in maps and photographs of the earth's surface. Unfortunately, they often do not recognize the parallax in language, and they accept verbal formulations as being absolute truths. They talk about the *Holy Roman Empire*, when in reality it was not

holy or Roman or an empire. More recently there was the *German Democratic Republic*, which from the viewpoint of democracies in the West was neither democratic nor a republic in the generally accepted meanings of these terms. Some people no longer speak about agreements being *broken*; they simply use the word *inoperative*. And armies are no longer supposed to *retreat*; they just *regroup*. Similarly, stock markets no longer *fall*; they merely *consolidate*.

The paradoxes of translating are basically the paradoxes of language and of culture. Accordingly this volume is organized in such a way as to explain first a number of the important features of language (Chapters 2 – 6) and then of culture in its relation to language, i. e. translating seen from the perspective of sociolinguistics (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 is concerned with the issues of functional equivalence, and Chapter 9 deals with translation procedures. Chapter 10 discusses various theories of translation and their relation to adequacy in interlingual communication.

This book is not a text on how to transform active sentences into passive ones, how to foreground or background a phrase, or how to mark irony in written conversation, since there are plenty of handbooks which treat such matters. This volume aims at a broader understanding of the problems of interlingual communication as highlighted by the structures of language and of society. Accordingly, the principal emphases of this treatment of translating are functional equivalence between languages, the indeterminacy of language as a parallax of reality, and translating as a communication event rather than as a system for matching the features of source and target languages. As a way of dealing meaningfully with these issues, much is said about discourse features, including rhetoric and style, and the functioning of language as a type of game involving constant negotiating to arrive at understanding within and between languages. In game theory as applied to verbal communication there are only partial winners and never a perfect game.

*Chapter 2*

# The Functions and Theories of Language

In order to have a more satisfactory understanding of what is involved in interlingual communication, it is essential to view first the major functions and theories about language. By considering many of the diverse functions of language it is possible to understand better the amazing complexity of verbal communication, and a brief look at the more important major theories about language can provide a much more satisfactory means of understanding how people communicate.

The functions of language are of two basic types: psychological and sociological. The psychological functions may be described as the means by which people negotiate with reality, and the sociological functions can be said to be those ways by which people negotiate with other persons. The psychological functions may be regarded as essentially internal or subjective, and the sociological functions as external and interpersonal.

## The Psychological Functions of Language

The primary psychological functions of language are naming, stating, modeling of reality, expression, and cognition. The psychological necessity to give names to experience is so obvious that people sometimes fail to realize its significance until they have read the stirring story of Helen Keller and the powerful insights gained by her discovery of a symbol for water. The eagerness with which most small children grasp for new words also highlights the importance of having symbols for identifying and controlling things. Finding just the right word to symbolize some object or event in a person's experience seems to give some control over such things and happenings.

But naming is not enough. People want to say something about the objects and events they name. And so they produce subject-predicate or topic-comment statements, e.g. *John ran off* and *John, I don't like him*. They also want to be able to link together strings of such statements, since single propositions are entirely

too restricted to satisfy certain psychological needs.

People, however, need something more profound from language than the ability to string sentences together or to name phenomena. In one way or another they instinctively feel that words should provide a system for viewing the world. If they can call *Lassie* a *dog* and if all *dogs* can be called *canines* and if all *canines* can be called *animals*, then there must be a way in which verbal symbols somehow reflect reality, although imperfectly. When they also learn that the word *cat* may represent not only a pet house cat, but can be used in talking about *lions*, *tigers*, and *leopards*, they discover that a word may indeed have more than one function in the hierarchy of names, that is, it may have more than one meaning. Such sets of words are never a perfect reflection of reality, but only one way in which people have conceptualized experience. It is only "their reality" .

Another area in which language tends to model reality is in the four major semantic classes of lexemes (words and idioms), namely, (1) entities, e. g. *boy*, *horse*, *tree*, *house*, *sun*, *hill*, (2) activities, e.g. *come*, *walk*, *die*, *talk*, *rule*, *hit*, (3) characteristics, primarily qualities and quantities, e.g. *good*, *fast*, *brilliant*, *awkward*, *quickly*, and (4) relations, e. g. *in*, *through*, *behind*, *during*, *when*, *because*, *although*. Entities relate to activities in a number of ways: as agents, e. g. *John worked hard*, as experiencers, e.g. *John died*, as instruments, e. g. *a stone broke the window*, as location, e. g. *went home*, and as benefactees, e.g. *Mary was given a car*. Activities may be qualified or quantified by characteristics, e. g. *ran fast*, *worked a lot*, and *slept more*. Similarly, entities may be qualified or quantified, e.g. *fine person*, *large hill*, and *many birds*. Although many relations are not marked by words, but by order, e.g. *John hit Bill*, some relations are marked by words, e. g. space (*water in the tank*), time (*read while listening to music*), coordination (*oranges and apples*), subordination (*come if you can*), and linkage (*John was very foolish. Furthermore, he was completely irresponsible*).

Another psychological function of language is expression. This may occur in several different forms and is not designed to influence other persons. Rather, its purpose is to give vent to a person's own feelings. Such expressions may be simply cases of emotive response to some event, e. g. *ouch*, *damn it*, *hurrah*, and *oh boy*, or it may be a matter of playing with words, something which small children often love to do and something which

adults do more often than they will usually admit.

Expressive language may, however, be a matter of aesthetic endeavor in arranging words to display balance, proportion, and symmetry. Words may also be manipulated so as to create or reflect a particular psychological atmosphere, e.g. serious or playful, clear or mysterious, and imperative or suggestive. Aesthetic expression may also involve rhythm, whether phonological or semantic. Certain of these aesthetic aspects of expressive language may also be exploited in the sociological functions of language, since they may be important for increasing the impact or appeal of a discourse. But the expressive use of language fulfills a much more basic psychological function.

Probably the most important psychological function of language is cognition, the use of language to think. This does not mean that all cognition is verbal. One may think in terms of graphic relations or in terms of related series of events, but all complex or abstract thinking makes at least some use of language. The amount of time which the average person gives to the use of language in cognition (silently talking to oneself) occupies more time than any other activitiy except sleeping — and some people talk in their sleep. The manipulation of verbal symbols within the brain not only occupies more time, but in terms of ultimate goals and benefits it is probably the most important human activity.

## The Sociological Functions of Language

The primary sociological functions of language, that is, those functions by which people relate to and influence one another, are of the following types: interpersonal, informative, imperative, performative, and emotive. The interpersonal function is listed first because of its strategic importance, despite the fact that it is often overlooked in discussions of the ways in which language is used by ordinary people in everyday circumstances.

The interpersonal function of language primarily involves the ways in which people negotiate and/or maintain social status, in other words, how they make use of language to help establish themselves in the social "pecking order" and how they maintain these relations with other persons. In most languages there are quite distinct levels or registers, including ritual, formal, informal, casual, and intimate speech. For example, at an elaborate banquet a butler might very well invite the guests to enter the din-

ing room by saying. "The guests may now proceed to the banquet hall." In one's own home, however, a host is much more likely to say to distinguished guests, "May I suggest that we all find our places at the table." But at a gathering of close friends a person is likely to say, "Come! Let's eat!" and at a picnic a corresponding expression might be "Come and get it!" while to members of one's own family an expression such as "Soup's on!" might be used.

The use of these various levels or registers of language depends primarily upon the purposes of power and solidarity. People who wish to symbolize their power often talk down to others, and those who wish to increase their power often try to imitate the speech of those in power. To gain greater solidarity with other people, a speaker or writer usually attempts to use precisely the same level that the audience uses and appreciates. This means that people become classified linguistically as members of an "in-group" or of an "out-group." In-groups, whether professional or social, often develop their own jargons and distinctive slang, and such social dialects may become so distinctive that one needs to speak of diglossia, two different forms of the same language, as in the case of Black English and Standard American English.

Language may even be used in a strictly phatic manner, that is, for the purpose of maintaining a relation rather than for saying anything that is overtly relevant. For example, the semantic content of conversation at cocktail parties is often almost zero, but in order to appear to be enjoying oneself, it is important to keep on chattering cleverly about inconsequential matters.

The most obvious function of language is informative, the use of speech or writing to influence the cognitive content or state of other people. This informative function is a part, even though minimal, of other functions, but it probably does not amount to more than twenty percent of all uses of language. In order for the informative function of language to be significant, it must be built upon what is already present in the mind of a receptor, and this suggests a significant degree of verbal negotiating. Without a basis on which to build new information, speakers too often talk over the heads of their audience or two people simply talk past one another.

The imperative function of language involves an attempt to influence the behavior of receptors. This function may be accomplished by commands or exhortations, but it is often more effectively carried out by means of an appropriate illustration, a point-

ed joke, or a searching question. Its use, however, always implies a measure of authority or power, but its effectiveness usually involves appealing to a receptor's own self-interest, and this also implies a considerable measure of verbal negotiating.

The performative function of language involves primarily a change in the status of receptors, for example, in solemnizing a marriage, in sentencing a criminal, in cursing an enemy, and in blessing a benefactor. The words themselves are expected to establish a different status or state of an object. Those who employ performative language are often authority figures, or they are credited with possessing esoteric knowledge about the power of words. In most instances, performative language is highly ritualized and fixed in form. In fact, it is this fixed formalization which seems to give performative language its power and prestige.

The emotive function of language involves altering the emotive state of receptors, and for this purpose it must depend heavily upon the associative or connotative meanings of words. The range of emotions which can be influenced by this function of language is unlimited since language can inspire deeply felt religious devotion and it can also prompt hilarious outbursts of laughter. The exploitation of this function of language has become the object of intense study by some linguists, the source of enormous wealth for gifted humorists, and the means of political power by those who can sway the crowds. Unfortunately, this emotive function of language is the least understood of all functions and therefore potentially the most dangerous and powerful, as well as the most honored and feared.

Relatively few discourses are restricted to a single function. In fact, most speaking and writing involve several different functions and often in quite different proportions. A speech by a local politician must obviously have some informative content, although it may be minimal, but it certainly needs to perform an interpersonal function of social solidarity with the audience. At the same time it must involve an emotive appeal for support and an exhortation to do something about the issues which have been mentioned. Similarly, a friendly letter will almost always contain some information, but its primary purpose is usually a reconfirmation of interpersonal relations and a desire to cheer up the recipient.

## Theories of Language

The diferent theories of language are essentially different per-

spectives or ways of viewing the vastly diverse and complex phenomena of verbal communication. For the classical world of Greece and Rome the focus of language study was the effective use of language, with special emphasis upon rhetorical structures and stylistic excellence. The ability to use language well was a means of power and wealth, and probably no society in the history of the world has dedicated so much time and energy to the elaboration and refining of rhetorical techniques and skills.

In the Greek and Roman world there was also a profoundly mystical view of language. First, because of its seemingly supernatural power in cursing, blessing, divining, and exorcism. And second, because of its seemingly inherent insights about the nature of reality, something which appealed enormously to idealist philosophers, whose systems of thought not only paralleled closely the hierarchies and taxonomies of words, but often seemed to be simply an elaborated lexicon and grammar.

About this same time a quite different approach to language emerged in India, as exemplified by the Sanskrit grammar of Panini, developed sometime in the period of 350 to 250 B.C. This grammar describes in minute detail the features of sound, word formation, and syntax of classical Sanskrit, but it had no influence on linguistic theories in Western Europe until the end of the eighteenth century, when the discovery of Sanskrit radically changed scholarly views about language.

During the medieval period language became primarily the tool of logic and philosophy, and Latin grammar became the model for the pedagogical grammars of most Western European languages. Hebrew, the one language outside of the Indo-European family of languages, should have encouraged people to see its many similarities to Arabic. But theologians were too disposed to think of Hebrew as being God's language, rather than simply a different way of communicating ideas. Something of this mystical reverence for Hebrew occurs even today among those who engage in glossolalia. Inserted words are almost always borrowed from biblical Hebrew, but with heavily altered pronunciation. The reason for this is simply that "speaking in tongues" is regarded as essentially a form of prayer, and hence it is only appropriate in prayer to God to use Hebrew, which, people argue, must have been used by God when he created the universe because the story

of creation in the book of Genesis is in Hebrew.

The discovery of Sanskrit and the realization that it was closely related to almost all the languages in Western Europe stimulated a period of intense linguistic activity in studying the history of various languages and in making exhaustive comparisons of the sounds, the word formations, and the syntax. In general, however, this work in the nineteenth century was done within various university departments of philology rather than in special departments of linguistics.

The influence of Panini's Sanskrit grammar and of the pioneering work of linguists studying so-called "new languages" in the colonial world gave rise to quite a different view of languages, highlighted and summarized in Saussure's important contribution (1916). In this small volume written by two of Saussure's students on the basis of classroom notes, a clear distinction is made between diachronic and synchronic, that is, between an historical view of the language development and a description of a language at a particular point of time.

This emphasis upon a descriptive approach to language was based on two important developments in a structural study of languages: first, in Eastern Europe with Trubetskoy (1939), Propp (1958), Jakobson (1963), and the Prague school (with special interest in phonology and discourse), and second, in North America with Boas (1940) and several of his students at Columbia University, and especially with Bloomfield (1933) and Sapir (1939), as well as Bloch and Trager (1942) and Hockett (1958). During this period there was a good deal of suspicion about the role of semantics, largely because of previous overemphasis on psychology and meaning as an explanation for everything that happens in language. But despite a general avoidance of the role of semantics in language, Weinreich (1958, 1963, and 1966) made some very significant contributions to the understanding of the role of semantics in language structures.

In North America a number of different structural approaches to language developed since Bloomfield's emphasis on item and arrangement did not seem to provide an adequate perspective for some of the intricate and interesting aspects of language behavior. An adaptation of the item-and-arrangement approach became known as "Tagmemics" (Pike 1954 - 1955), and this has been employed widely by members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. In this system the focus is upon spots and fillers, as well as upon

hierarchical structures.

A stratificational approach to language was promoted by Lamb (1966) and Makkai (1972), with their elaborate networks of relations within and between strata. This theory of language was, however, largely eclipsed by the insights of Zellig Harris (1957) and his star pupil Noam Chomsky (1965, 1974, 1986), who insisted upon looking at language from the dynamic perspective of its generation by means of a series of transformations from an abstract underlying base to the surface structure. In this theory syntax is focal and physical reality is touched only in phonetics and in the semantics of actual discourse. This theory has been generally criticized for its underlying philosophical idealism, which requires an "autonomous syntax," ideal native speakers, and propositional logic as an explanatory tool for what happens in the generative process.

Because of the reductionist character of transformational-generative grammar (often spoken of us "T-G grammar" ) and its failure to deal realistically with figurative meanings, language performance, and semantic relations beyond the sentence (cf. Wierzbicka 1988, for a critique of this theory), a number of other theories have developed. Instead of beginning with an abstract, underlying syntax, Chafe (1970), McCawley (1988), and others have insisted on beginning with an underlying semantics, a type of "generative semantics."

The failure of T-G grammar to deal with language performance has indirectly contributed considerably to the development of sociolinguistics, as illustrated in the publications of Labov (1972), Hymes (1974), Gumperz (1982), and a number of others in various parts of the world. Sociolinguistics is not a theory of language, but a particular emphasis upon language as used in a society, and not upon some reductionist or refined form of the language which no one actually uses. There is no such thing as an ideal speaker-hearer and the competence of such a person is a reductionist myth, although often a useful way of talking about the differences between underlying and surface structures.

During the twentieth century linguistics in Europe has been largely functional in orientation. The early influence of Malinowski (1922) and the emphases of Hjelmslev (1953) and Firth (1957) focused attention on how languages work, that is, on what they accomplish. This perspective has been effectively developed by Halliday (1978) into a theory of systemic grammar, in which

the focus is not on static structures but on a dynamic system, which can treat numerous phases of language, for example, from language acquisition by children to complex patterns of cohesion in languages of Papua-New Guinea.

One new, fruitful approach to language has been the work of Sperber and Wilson (1990) in emphasizing the role of relevance in language design and practice. Much can be explained by the principle of relevance, but it is somewhat misleading to load so much on a single principle when there are so many functions of language and so many different principles which govern the choice of discourse structures and processes. The tendency to seek single principles or structures as a key to language is, however, rather widespread. Chomsky, for example, employed an "autonomous syntax" in this way, and Halliday and Hasan (1976) have seen in cohesion a somewhat similar unifying principle.

One orientation to language which has been international in scope and interest has been semiotics, with its seminal contributions from Peirce (1934), Wittgenstein (1958), Sperber (1975), Eco (1979), and Sebeok (1981). North American linguists have been much less interested in semiotics than European linguists have been, but increasingly scholars have been forced to recognize that language is essentially a code, i. e. a system of signs, and semiotics as the science of signs has profound insights to contribute to an understanding of how any code works.

Peirce's major contributions have been in the area of language as a code, with all of its signs defined by other signs and hence the impossibility of any definition being absolute. This ultimate "fuzziness" of definitions has crucial significance for language, since it means that language is no different from any other type of symbolic human behavior. Furthermore, it only exists in and through society, so that it is a shared set of verbal habits and can only be understood in terms of the specific culture of which it is an integral part. In other words, nothing within language is autonomous, nor is language itself autonomous.

One of Wittgenstein's major contributions (1958) to the understanding of language has been the recognition of its crucial role as a "game" (in the sense of "game theory" ) by which people negotiate a mutual or one-sided advantage. This role in negotiating is clearly evident in such activities as buying and selling, formulating contracts, making treaties, and engaging in courtship, whether for mutual or one-sided advantage. But language as a ne-

gotiating tool is also crucial in the activity of a writer who tries to negotiate with his readers to communicate meaning. They are never the inert "target" of what is written, but they must receive and attempt to understand what has been written. A good writer, however, will always try to anticipate the reactions of his readers and in an important sense will negotiate with them by means of language. The readers will likewise negotiate with the text by ticking off the various possible meanings and by trying to determine which meaning or meanings are possible in terms of the immediate verbal context or in terms of what is known about the author or the circumstances of his writing. This "unpacking" of the text is basically a kind of dialogic process, a give-and-take in communication. This aspect of language is especially relevant to the process of translation, which involves not two negotiating activities, but four, and not in one language-culture, but in two.

For a translator the different theories of language provide important insights into the nature of language, despite the fact that no one theory is adequate to explain fully the enormous complexity of verbal communication. Theories are only models of what they represent. They are never the full reality any more than an architect's drawing is the building which it depicts. But maps, blueprints, pictures, and mathematical formulas are all isomorphic resemblances, and they provide insight about what they represent. Similarly, different theories of language and of translating can help people understand aspects of communication which would remain otherwise obscure or elusive. Theories of language, however, are not a substitute for speaking and writing any more than are theories of movement of an organism through a liquid a substitute for swimming.

Chapter 3

# The Structures of Language

Before attempting to deal with the structures and meaning of lexemes (words and idioms), syntax, and discourse in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively, it would seem useful to have an overview of some of the significant features of language structures. In this way the next three chapters can be much more meaningful, and it will be possible to see both the forest and the trees.

All languages consist of four major structures: sounds, lexemes, syntax, and discourse. These structures are often described in terms of distinct levels, but this is misleading. What is important is that the relations within each of these structures and the relations of their respective units to the real world of experience are quite different.

Each language has a limited number of distinctive sounds which are crucial in signalling differences of meaning (the so-called "phonemes" ). But each of these phonemes consists of a set of closely related sounds (often called "phones" ), and each phoneme contrasts in at least one dimension with all the other phonemes in the language. It is this relation of contrast which is so important for the functioning of a language. In addition, within any language the sounds are not a random selection of possible vocal noises, but a systematically organized set of sounds which are contrastively related to one another.

Most people think of the sounds of a language as being single units which are always phonetically identical, since they are usually written by a single letter having a fixed shape. But the phones (the phonetically different sounds) which make up a phoneme may be quite different. For example, in English the *t* in *till* normally has a little puff of air after the voiceless stop, but when an *s* precedes the *t*, as in *still*, there is no such puff of air. In word-final position before certain other sounds the *t* may not even be released, e.g. the first *t* in *sit tight* and the *t* preceding *p* in *sit please*. Furthermore, in the word *litter* the *t* and *r* sounds combine to form a so-called "flap r." A phoneme is not, therefore, a single identical sound, but a bundle of related sounds which contrasts with other such bundles of sounds. This phenomenon of formal diversity and functional unity is common to all

phases of language. For example, the plural suffix in English is a voiceless *s* sound after words ending in *p*, *t* or *k*, e.g. *ligs*, *pits*, and *oaks*, but after words ending in *b*, *d*, or *g* the plural suffix is a voiced *z* sound, e.g. *tubs*, *pads*, and *bugs*. After words ending in a stop consonant plus an *s*-like sound (technically called sibilant affricates), e.g. *churches* and *bridges*, or ending in a voiced or voiceless *s*-like sound, e.g. *roses*, *courses*, and *sashes*, the plural suffix consists of a central vowel plus the sound *z*. This means that the same suffix marking pluralization has three different forms, but a single function or meaning.

Another important aspect of sounds is the fact that the distinctiveness of a phoneme (a functional class of phones) depends primarily upon the features of other related sounds. For example, in the English sets *sip/sib*, *bit/bid*, and *luck/lug* the final pairs of consonants may in some instances be pronounced in essentially the same way. What really signals the contrast is the relative length of the preceding vowel, which before the voiceless consonants *p*, *t*, and *k* is appreciably shorter than before the voiced consonants *b*, *d*, and *g*.

These instances of the effect of one sound or set of sounds upon the form of other sounds (a form of conditioned variation) are essentially no different from what occurs in other areas of language. For example, the different meanings of *state* depend upon accompanying words, e.g. *state of California*, *state of health*, and *to travel in state*.

The contrasts in the distinctive sounds of a language are systematic. The stop sounds of English, for example, differ in both articulatory position and voicing, and these differences can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

| | labial | alveolar | palatal |
|---|---|---|---|
| voiceless | p | t | k |
| voiced | b | d | g |

This series of stops is paralleled by nasal consonants *m*, *n*, and *ng* (the digraph *ng* stands for a single velar consonant), and these are partially similar to the set of continuants: *f/v*, *s/z* as well as the set written as *th*, which is voiceless in *thin* and *think*, but voiced in *then* and *this*. The stop series is completely symmetrical, but the *f/v* set is not bilabial, but labiodental, and the alveolar position has both sibilant (*s/z*) and nonsibilant sounds (*r/l/n*). Finally, in the post-velar position the only continuant is voiceless, namely, *h*. In other words, the system of sounds is only

partially systematic. But this is true of many aspects of language. For example, in English there are a number of sex-distinguishing terms for blood relatives, e. g. *father/mother*, *brother/sister*, *uncle/aunt*, and *son/daughter*, but when it comes to *cousin*, there is no such contrasting set. Similarly, the so-called modal auxiliaries *may*, *can*, *will*, and *must* occur before infinitives without *to*, e.g. *may go*, *can stop*, *will enter*, *must leave*, but *ought* must occur with *to* preceding an infinitive, e.g. *ought to stay*, *ought to help*. The verb *have* in the sense of obligation also patterns like *ought* rather than like *must*, e.g. *have to leave*.

Such irregularities are typical of language patterning, but they are not essentially different from what occurs in all areas of human behavior. Introductions of speakers often begin with a statement about the speaker "needing no introduction," but the introduction continues with a list of distinguished accomplishments. Then, in order to make the audience feel that the speaker is really a human being, the introduction is likely to end with a joke or anecdote about the speaker's limitations. Within this framework there are a number of possibilities for substitution, addition, and deletion, which illustrate well the unpredictability and irregularity of human activity.

In addition to the consonants and vowels of a language (often called the "segmental phonemes" ), there are also a number of features which may accompany these sounds and which may radically alter the meaning of what is said. These "paralinguistic" features include, for example, the tone of voice. A growling pronunciation of *I love you* can signal hate or disgust rather than love, and *yeah* pronounced with both falling and rising intonation can mean "No:" Rising levels of pitch can mark increasing insistence that what is being said is right, and greater loudness can mean emphasis. Also an exaggerated length of a syllabic part of a word can increase appreciably the implied degree of a feature, e.g. *it was a looong way home*!

Particular types of pronunciation may also carry meaning about a person's level of education, where he or she grew up, or the socioeconomic class to which such an individual belongs. Even the absence of speech can also tell a good deal. For example, in the Philippines a TV repairman or a plumber will always tell a caller that he will immediately take care of the problem, but if he hesitates for a crucial three to five seconds before assuring the caller of his intentions, he rarely if ever shows up. Filipinos im-

mediately understand the meaning of the hesitation and phone up someone else, since they realize that the assurance of help, despite the delay in responding, is a way of trying to maintain friendly relations regardless of inability or unwillingness to help. Foreigners are usually very frustrated by such events, since they do not understand the meaning of the delay in responding.

Hesitation in response is often very meaningful in other contexts. In the process of telephoning to persons given as references about the qualifications of prospective employees, the amount of time required by a respondent to decide just how to answer without offending anyone and still tell the truth is usually inversely proportionate to the desirability of the candidate. That is to say, the longer it takes to formulate an answer the less likely is the candidate to be satisfactory for the job.

These paralinguistic factors are extremely important in oral communication, but in written communication quite different means (usually explicit wording) must be employed to signal the same meanings. There are, however, a number of paralinguistic features in written or printed texts, e. g. style of writing, typeface, accuracy of spelling, type of punctuation, and format. Handwriting often reveals much about age and health, as well as disposition, and typeface in a book can signal considerable information about the time of publication. Inaccuracy of spelling is not a good recommendation for a secretarial position, and use of punctuation can be a good index of education, while format says a great deal about a person's aesthetic sensitivities and/or logical organization of thought.

The paralinguistic features of a communication are not, however, the only elements which influence the understanding of and appreciation for an utterance. There are also many so-called "extralinguistic features" which are important in influencing what and how communication takes place. In oral discourse hand and facial gestures are extremely important, and eye contact can be crucial in convincing hearers that a speaker is really talking to them. Body stance and type of clothing can also tell part of the message. For example, television advertisements about medicines frequently have the pitchperson dress in a doctor's uniform with a telltale stethoscope dangling from or stuffed into a pocket.

Despite the fact that many extralinguistic features of communication are lost in written communication, there are always a number of important signs. For years one could readily spot books

published in Eastern Europe by the poor binding. The type of paper tells much about the nature of the contents, and the quality of the printing usually matches the quality or importance of the ideas. Green as the color of binding is much appreciated in the arid parts of the world, but not in the tropics, and yellow is usually not favored, except in China where it is associated with imperial elegance. The color gold, however, seems to be universally appreciated.

The paralinguistic and extralinguistic features of communication also reveal many things about the participants and content of a communication, i.e. the sources (speakers or writers), the subject of a discourse, and the intended audience. For example, these features of a discourse can tell much about the education of a speaker, his or her social class, the geographical dialect, the extent of special knowledge, and even the immediate state of a speaker, e. g. nervous, calm, tired, or even psychoneurotic. These features can also indicate whether the subject matter of a discourse is crucial, trivial, technical, or even boring to the speaker. And in general they can even indicate the likely audience, e.g. children, specialists, or general public. Even the status of the writer and the addressee can be signalled by who gets carbon copies of letters.

Most people rarely think of language as consisting of structures, that is, of parts which fit together in systematic ways. The sounds of the language are simply the letters of the alphabet, the vocabulary is only a listing of words in a dictionary, and the grammar is only a set of rules which do not make much sense, since there are so many exceptions. And the idea of a discourse having a structure seems almost unthinkable. Most people never think about the order or arrangement of what they say or write. They may show appreciation for a well-written essay or story, but they seldom realize that their evaluation is based on such factors as unity, completeness, proportion, balance, and cohesion.

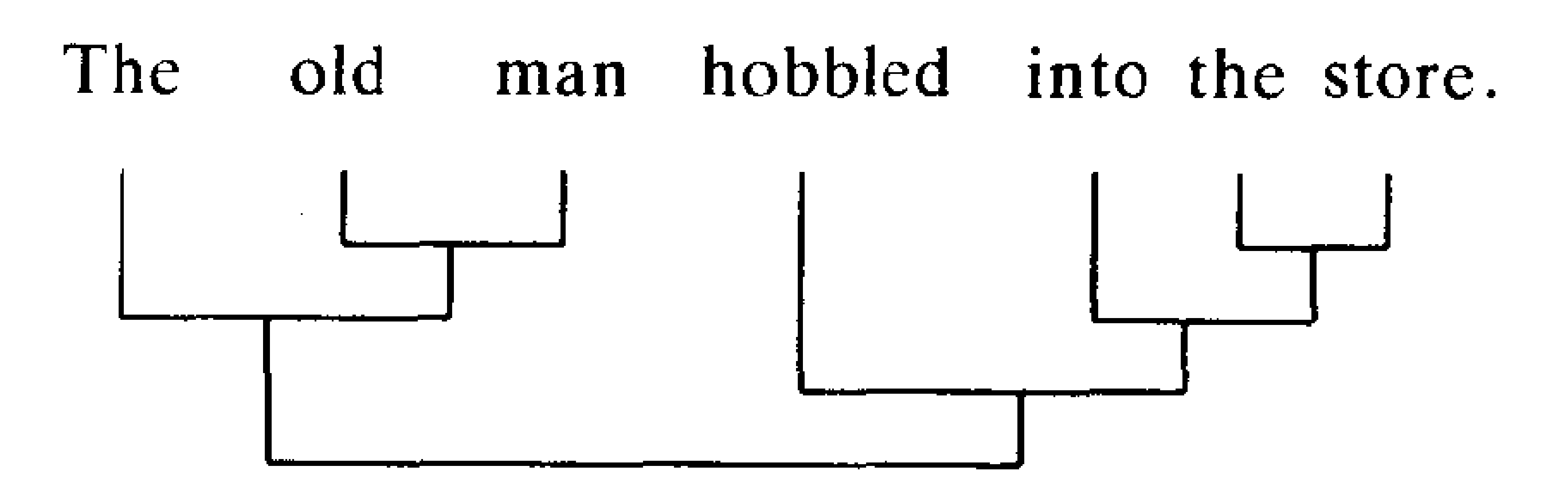
The lexical part of language (the words and idioms) is structured in two quite distinct ways: formal and semantic. The major formal classes of words in English consist of such sets as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and exclamatory particles, e. g. *ouch*, *oh*, and *eek*. The major semantic classes, however, are somewhat parallel, but, as already noted in Chapter 2, quite distinct, namely, entities, e. g. *man*, *child*, *house*, *tree*, *hill*, activities, e. g. *eat*, *think*, *work*,

*walk*, characteristics, e.g. *good*, *swift*, *possible*, *true*, *beautiful*, and relations, e.g. *in*, *through*, *during*, *because*, *furthermore*.

A word such as *beauty* is formally a noun, but it is semantically a characteristic of something, since it is nothing in and of itself, but always a feature or set of features of something else. Similarly, *begin* is a verb, but it serves essentially as a characteristic or feature of its complement, e.g. *he began to work*. The verb *work* is semantically the focal element and the verb *begin* simply states an aspect of the working. The noun *reason* is often a way of talking about a set of relations between two events, e.g. *the reason he came was to collect the money*. Note, however, that *reason* in the expression *he may reason in that way* represents a particular kind of intellectual activity, and a word such as *hill* in the context *he must hill up the beans* represents primarily a type of activity.

The meanings of words may also be said to be structured into semantic domains. For example, the meanings of the English terms *come*, *go*, *arrive*, *depart*, *enter*, *exit*, *fall*, and *rise* not only form a tight cluster of terms involving movement, but they also consist of contrasting pairs. The series *run*, *walk*, *skip*, *hop*, *dance*, *crawl* also form a cluster involving movement, but the differences involve means and manner of locomotion, namely, the number and order of limb movements. A set such as *walk*, *amble*, *meander*, *hobble*, *shuffle* constitute a different type of relation, namely, a generic meaning of *walk* and more specific kinds of walking in *amble*, *meander*, *hobble*, and *shuffle*

The syntactic structures of language are of two basic types: syntagmatic (the linear relations of grammatical units) and paradigmatic (the vertical or substitutional relations of grammatical units.) The syntagmatic relations can be easily illustrated by the sentence *the old man hobbled into the store*, for which the following diagram specifies the sets of immediate constituents constituting the relevant structural units:



The paradigmatic structures are based upon the relations of substitution. For example, in the grammatical frame *the boy ran out* it is possible to substitute a number of other words for each of the components, as illustrated in the following sets:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| the | boy | ran | out |
| a | child | walked | in |
| this | man | rode | through |
| some | animal | crawled | under |
| that | ball | rolled | around |

The fact that certain words can fill particular positions in a syntagmatic frame means that they belong to the same paradigmatic class, e.g. determiners, nouns, verbs, and adverbs. There is, however, another type of paradigmatic relation in the substitution of one term as a cross reference to another. For example, the pronoun *he* can substitute for *my father* in a succeeding sentence.

Most people are conscious of the rules of grammar and how sentences must be put together, but they are largely unaware that there are also patterns for putting sentences together into paragraphs, combining paragraphs into sections, and organizing sections into chapters and chapters into books. There are so many different kinds of discourse structures that many persons feel that almost any order or arrangement of sentences is justified. This is certainly not true, and readers are quick to recognize whether a particular text is well organized or poorly arranged. For the most part, however, they do not know just why they react as they do. Nevertheless, most people do have a significant competence for the organization of discourse, whether it is the tightly organized forms of lyric poetry or the rambling nature of some conversations.

Perhaps the most readily recognized discourse structure is the story, which normally begins with a steady state which is then disturbed by a series of complications leading up to a climax, at which point a crucial decision or action takes place, and this leads to a resolution of the crisis and finally to a second steady state. There are, of course, a number of variations on this scenario or schema. The story may begin just before the crisis, and background information may be given in flashbacks. Or there may not be a resolution of the crisis — only an agonizing, prolonged crisis, as a way of suggesting that the future is as meaningless or tragic as the past.

The four types of language structure: the sounds, the lexicon,

the syntax, and the discourse represent four different degrees of options in introducing variations on existing structures. The number of options for changing the character of the sound system of a language is very limited, and certainly so for any one speaker of a language. But the sound systems of a language do change, although quite slowly. In fact, most speakers are unaware of such changes within their own lifetimes.

Changes in the form of words and their meanings are much more rapid and are apparently directly related to the density of communication. But no one person is likely to have much lasting influence about new coinage of words or their spread. On the other hand, a new area of human experience, e.g. electronic communication, may give rise to a number of new terms, e.g. *DOS*, *RAM*, and *ROM*, and shifts in the meaning of many old ones, e.g. *toggle*, *directory*, *dump*, *load*, *flush*, *window*, *file*, *menu*, and *cursor*.

Changes in syntax appear to be even more restricted than those of the lexicon, since so-called "errors" seem to be more obvious. This, however, applies primarily to presumably formal levels of speaking and writing. The speech of everyday activity is quite another matter and is subject to many kinds of syntactic innovation, of which one of the most conspicuous is the shift from *for you and me* to *for you and I*. This shift from the objective to the subjective forms of the first person pronouns in second position after prepositions has been going on for some time, but it has gained wide acceptance in the last ten years. Furthermore, it is spreading to other structures by analogy, e.g. *this affects you and I* and even *because of I and you*. At present, there seem to be two rather different patterns, one used in books and magazine articles and another used in conversation and songs.

The freedom for innovation in discourse is much greater than in syntax, since the "rules" relating to discourse structure are much broader and more open to a variety of techniques for increasing impact and appeal by various rhetorical devices and stylistic eccentricities. But there are boundaries beyond which writers must not go if they wish to appeal to other than a small clique of devoted followers.

It is not strange that structural linguists began their research into language structures in the area of sounds, for these are the least influenced through conscious choices by speakers. Linguists then tackled problems of morphology, the structure of words,

since these likewise are relatively fixed in form. Later, the area of syntax dominated the scene, and at present the structures of discourse have become a rich area for intense investigation.

On each stratum or level of language there are two quite different sets of relations: the internal and the external. For the structure of the sounds, the internal relations are primarily ones of opposition, that is, the features that separate *p* from *b* and *p* from *t*, phonologically two close contrasts.

The relations of verbal sounds to the nonlinguistic world are of two types: formal and semantic. The verbal sounds can be analyzed acoustically in the same way that any nonverbal sound can be analyzed. But verbal sounds can also have a semantic relation to the real world through "sound symbolism." Note, for example, the "meaning" of the initial consonants in the series *flip*, *flutter*, *fly*, *flare*, and *flash*, and the vowel and final consonant in the series *gush*, *flush*, *slush*, and *mush*. The differences of vowel sounds in the following pairs are also semantically significant (Bloomfield 1933): *snap/snip*, *snuff/sniff*, *bang/bing*, *yap/yip*, *squawk/squeak*, *gloom/gleam*, and *tiny/teeny*.

The internal structures of words are likewise both semantic and formal. Some of the semantic relations have already been noted, and the formal ones will be treated more fully in the following chapter. The major formal structures of words involve the processes of compounding (two of more words or stems combined into a single unit, e.g. *blackbird*, *breakwater*, *dovetail*), affixation (stems or words with suffixes, prefixes, and infixes), systematic alteration, e.g. *sing*, *sang*, *sung* and *ring*, *rang*, *rung*, suppletion, e.g. *go/went*, *be/is/am/are*, reduplication, whether complete (e.g. *put-put* and *choo-choo*) or partial (e.g. Tojolabal-*set* 'to go around' and *setet* 'to go around and around,' *-tim* 'to spread out' and *timim* 'to lightning'), and deletion, a rare linguistic phenomenon in which the systematic loss of phonemes is as meaningful as addition, e.g. the derivation of many masculine forms of French adjectives from the feminine forms.

The external relations of lexemes are to referents in the real or imagined world. The lexemes of a language may be said to "stand for" or "represent" the referents, primarily the entities, activities, characteristics, and relations in the practical world of experience. They may, however, also represent purely imaginary or conceptual entities, e.g. mermaids, unicorns, black holes, quasars, and infinity.

The internal relations of syntax are the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures which have just been mentioned above and which will be treated more fully in Chapter 5. There are, however, certain important isomorphic relations of syntax to the external world of experience. For example, the relation of subject-predicate and topic-comment reflect the experience of naming something and then commenting on it. The fact that in discourses old information usually precedes new information is also a part of real-world experience.

The internal relations of discourse structure consist of scenarios, schemata, and frames used in various genres, e.g. narratives, arguments, sermons, legal briefs, and jokes. These will be discussed rather fully in Chapter 7. There are also certain external relations which are especially important since they are congruent with human experience in other phases of life. The features of proportion, completeness, and unity in a text have "meaning" because they coincide or are "isomorphic" with related experiences in other areas, e.g. graphic art and architecture.

All the phenomena of language can be viewed from two quite different perspectives. People tend to talk about language as consisting of items in certain arrangements. Because of this, they usually speak of "structures" and generally picture these as more or less fixed sets of relations, although with certain exceptions and a good deal of fuzziness about the boundaries of meanings and formal classes. But such phenomena can also be viewed as processes of formation and use. In this way, the focus is on what happens to and by means of the structures, and for this perspective it is better to speak of "systems" as dynamic processes of interaction. This type of terminology lends itself more easily to thinking of language in terms of its functions. For any translator this way of talking and thinking about language has the distinct advantage of highlighting the concept of functional equivalence.

## Chapter 4
# The Structures and Meaning of Lexemes

Lexemes consist of words and idioms. The words may be defined as minimal free forms, which means that they can "stand alone," but such a definition is not much more helpful than defining a word as a string of letters with spaces at each end. A more useful way to define a word is to say that it is a unit of speech with relatively fixed internal distribution but relatively free external distribution, which means that alterations and additions to a stem or root are quite limited in number in comparison with the numerous ways in which a word can be combined with other words. In some languages words consist generally of a single syllable and are not internally modified, as in the case of Chinese, in which the only word structures are "fixed phrases," which may be classified as either compounds or idioms. In fact, there is no rigid, universally applicable means of defining a word, since in many languages there are important areas of overlap between words and syntactic phrases, e. g. the freely formed attributive phrases in English such as a *come-in-and-take-it-easy hospitality* and *a come-early-and-leave-late party*. Translating such attributive phrases usually means shifting to a descriptive clause.

Idioms are combinations of words, the meaning of which cannot be determined from the meanings of the parts, e. g. *to kick the bucket*, meaning 'to die,' and *from the frying pan into the fire*, meaning 'to experience increasingly worse circumstances.' Idioms are somewhat more open to intrusions and modifications than are words, and they are usually rather culture-specific, that is, they depend very much upon a specific social or ecological setting. Because of their close identification with a particular language and culture, idioms usually carry more impact than nonidiomatic expressions. Finding satisfactory equivalents for idioms is one of the most difficult aspects of translating. In many instances idioms can only be satisfactorily rendered by non-idioms in a target language, although in the process much of the psychological impact is lost.

Most lexemes conform to the regular phonological structure of the language, but some (usually called "ideophones") depart rather radically, e. g. English *psst* (used to attract attention or

show disapproval), *shh* (a command for persons to be quiet), and *brrr* ( a characterization of intense cold). All languages apparently have some ideophones, while certain languages (especially Bantu, Bushman, and Hottentot) have hundreds of such lexemes. In storytelling these ideophones add enormously to the dramatic quality of the narration, most of which is completely lost in translation.

## Major Semantic Classes of Lexemes

Most lexemes are referential, that is, they represent referents in the real or linguistic "worlds." They may have unique referents, e. g. proper names and titles within specific contexts, or they may be one of the four major classes discussed in Chapter 3, namely, entities, activities, characteristics, and relations. What is particularly important about some of these lexemes is that they are semantically complex and therefore require careful qualification or "unpacking." For example, in the English phrase *good doctor* the adjective *good* does not characterize the moral qualities of the *doctor*, but rather the competence with which he or she performs the requisite professional tasks. A translator must be constantly alert to such problems. But there may also be a need for unpacking the distinctive semantic features. For example, the meaning of *heir* involves a number of semantic features as can be recognized in a definition such as "a person who has received or will receive something of value, generally following the death of someone who has made the gift possible." In many languages there is no specific term for *heir*, and accordingly at least some of the distinctive semantic features must be "unpacked" so as to provide a valid basis for functional equivalence.

The third major class of referentials are those lexemes which act as substitutes for other lexemes. These are predominantly the so-called "pronouns," e.g. *I*, *we*, *you*, *he*, *they*, *this*, *that*, *it*, *who*, and *which*, but may also include such expressions as *the former*, *the latter*, and *the following*. What often makes these referential substitutes so difficult to translate is that they may involve categories which are entirely lacking in a source or target language. For example, many languages have inclusive and exclusive forms of the first person plural pronoun, one form which includes the audience and another which excludes it. There may also be important distinctions based on the social and even divine status of

the respective speakers, hearers, and ones spoken to. In Navajo there is also a fourth person, namely, the second third person in a context.

A particularly difficult class of lexemes to deal with in translating are the semantically "empty" lexemes. For example, in the phrases *make a speech*, *make a talk*, *make a guess*, *make an announcement*, and *make a journey*, the verb *make* is semantically almost empty, since the activity in each instance is contained in the following noun. The verb *make* combines with nouns of activity to mark the subject as an agent and to permit the activity to be regarded as a unitary event which can be numbered; compare, for example, *he made a speech* in contrast with *he spoke*. Compare also *he made five speeches* and *he spoke five times*. Similarly, the verb *do* may also be almost semantically empty in such phrases as *do a dance*, *do a skit*, *do a performance*, *do a play*, *do a jig*, and *do a favor*.

## Minor Semantic Classes of Lexemes

In most languages there appear to be at least four different minor semantic classes: markers, exclamatives, attention-getters, and admonishers. The markers have no referential semantic content of their own, but they do perform significant functions of indicating relations, e.g. *to* as a marker of infinitive forms; and *there* in the statement *there is every reason to reject the proposal*, as a marker of a zero subject and therefore the fact that the predicate is both new information as well as the real topic. The conjunction *that* in the statement *I told them that I would not come* is a marker of indirect discourse.

Exclamatives serve to mark vivid emotional reactions or to emphasize what is being said, e.g. *ouch*, *damn*, *oh boy*, *hell*, and *hurrah*. Attention-getters are more frequent than is often thought, e.g. *hi*, *hey*, *psst*, *man*, and *you*, and admonishers may be illustrated by the ideophones *shh* and *tsktsk* and by the lateral click employed in driving horses.

## The Meaning of Lexemes

The designative meanings of lexemes represent referents in the practical or linguistic world, while the associative meanings

represent the values and attitudes resulting from the use of lexemes in discourses. Discussions of lexical semantics generally focus upon designative (or denotative) meanings, although for translators the associative (or connotative) meanings are often far more difficult, since they tend to be so subtle and elusive.

## 1. Associative Meaning

The associative meanings of a lexeme are derived primarily from the contexts (both cultural and linguistic) in which such lexemes habitually occur. That is to say, certain features of the contexts tend to "rub off" on the words. In the same way that one can often tell what work a person has been doing by the kinds of stains on clothing , so a word which is habitually employed by certain kinds of persons and in particular contexts is likely to acquire associative meanings reflecting such usage. In some dictionaries certain associative meanings of words are listed at the end of an entry by stating that a particular word is vulgar, colloquial, regional, pedantic, or technical, but few dictionaries go beyond such general designations.

The primary sources of associative meanings are (1) the persons who use such lexemes, (2) the settings in which such lexemes are generally employed, (3) the occurrence of such lexemes in prior texts (intertextuality), (4) contamination from linguistic collocations, (5) contamination from homophones, and (6) cultural values associated with the referents of the lexemes.

The persons who habitually use certain terms are one of the principal sources of associative meanings. Expressions such as *dearie*, *my goodness*, *sweetie*, *oh no*, and *my oh my* have been typical of female speech, while *chick*, *to bust on*, *to be bugged about*, *nerd*, *airhead*, and *to cream* are widespread college slang and have the related associative meanings. The four-letter words in English are generally regarded as vulgar and uncouth because of the people who habitually use them, and expressions such as *facticity*, *manifestations of temporality*, *disinformation*, *improbablistic*, and *neotraditionalism* carry associative meanings of pedantry and / or technical writing.

Many associative meanings are derived from the physical settings in which lexemes are used, e.g. church, political rallies, and sports events. Terms such as *saved*, *redeemed*, and *born again* signal a conservative segment of Christianity. Specific settings

can, however, radically alter the associative meanings. For example, the phrase *son of a bitch* normally has an associative meaning of crude vulgarity, but it can also have the associative meaning of friendly conviviality when two old buddies meet after some prolonged period of time and greet one another with an enthusiastic, "And how are you doing, you old son of a bitch."

The associative meanings of lexemes are often conditioned by their occurrences in well-known published sources. For example, the phrases *verily, verily* and *it came to pass* carry connotations of the King James Version of the Bible, while *of the people, by the people* and *for the people* immediately suggests the Gettysburg address.

Some associative meanings involve contextual contamination as the result of the occurrence of a particular lexeme in especially favorable or unfavorable expressions. For example, the meaning of *green* as a color is probably affected negatively by the fact that it also occurs in such phrases as *green on the job*, *green fruit* (which may not be green, but simply not ripe), *green with envy*, and *green-eyed monsters* (monsters never have blue eyes).

Some contamination in associative meaning may also be derived from homophones. For example, *cock* as a term for a rooster has a negative associative meaning because of the meaning of *cock* as a designation for a penis. Similarly, the term *ass* as a term for a donkey has generally been avoided in polite society.

Cultural values associated with the referent of a lexeme may also influence the associative meanings of a term. In Western Europe terms for a pig normally have negative associative meanings, since pigs do not rate high as pets, but in Melanesia pigs are important status symbols and the corresponding names for such animals have very positive associative meanings. In American English the lexemes such as *apple pie*, *ice cream*, *stars and stripes*, and *mother* have strong positive associative meanings, while *cancer*, *leprosy*, *pornography*, and *Mafia* usually have very unfavorable associative meanings.

Unfortunately, linguists have largely neglected the study of associative meanings, since such meanings seem to be so subjective, transient, and unsystematic, and most attempts to study associative meanings have been primarily anecdotal. The most extensive efforts to treat these meanings in a quantifiable manner have been carried out by Osgood and his associates (1957). By asking people to evaluate words on the basis of such dimensions as

good / bad, beautiful / ugly, strong / weak, light / dark, high / low, and warm / cold, they have been able to develop profiles of associative meanings which are amazingly stable for specific language-cultures. Furthermore, similar types of dimensions have been tested in diverse cultures. Such a methodology seems to provide a significant degree of objectivity to an otherwise elusive and highly subjective area of meaning.

## 2. Designative Meaning

The designative meaning of a lexeme includes the bundle of semantic features which serves to define the range of referents which the lexeme in question can represent. In a sense this is very similar to what makes a phoneme a distinctive sound, namely, the bundle of phonological features which sets it off from all other sounds.

For the most part, people have thought of meaning as being primarily a binary (two-way) relation between the word or sign and the referent, namely, what is represented by the sign. It is much more relevant, however, to regard meaning as a triad (three-way) relation between a sign, the referent, and the system of signs which makes possible the interpretation of the sign. This system of signs provides the basis for what Peirce (1934) called the "interpretant." The interpretation of a lexeme is always potential because of the nature of the system of signs (i.e. the code), but the interpretation is never realized without an interpreter who understands a sign on the basis of the social and personal grids of each language-culture. And since no two people ever have exactly the same backgrounds, there is always some loss or distortion in verbal communication. But as members within the same language-culture, they share enough common experience to guarantee meaningful communication.

The definition of any meaning of a lexeme depends upon determining the distinctive semantic features. This may be done componentially by distinguishing the sets of features which "determine" the contrasts. For example, for the series of blood relatives: *father*, *mother*, *grandfather*, *grandmother*, *son*, *daughter*, *grandson*, *granddaughter*, *brother*, *sister*, *aunt*, *uncle*, and *cousin*, the three distinctive sets of features are sex (masculine and feminine), generation (two preceding and two following the genealogical point of reference, usually spoken of as "ego"), and

degree of lineality (direct or lateral). By means of these features all the meanings of this set can be specified.

More commonly, however, designative meanings are stated in terms of some prototypical entity, activity, characteristic, or relation. The designative meanings of the lexemes *cup*, *mug*, and *demitasse* can be stated by setting up *cup* as the prototypical entity and stating the distinguishing features of *mug* and *demitasse* on the basis of differences from *cup* (Labov 1966). Similarly, the meanings of *munch*, *gobble*, *mince*, *devour*, and *wolf down* can be determined on the basis of the semantic features which distinguish these meanings from the meaning of *eat*, which can be regarded both as a prototype and as a kind of "semantic primitive."

In the same way that sounds come in related sets, so the meanings of lexemes come in related sets, called "semantic domains," e.g. geographical objects, artifacts, movement, communication, ethical characteristics, time, space, and degree. Some of these sets of meanings form well-defined clusters, e.g. *run*, *walk*, *hop*, *skip*, and *crawl*, in which there is at least one clearly defined feature distinguishing each member of the series. In other sets there are inclusive and included meanings, e.g. (1) *animal*, *dog*, *cat*, and *fox* and (2) *run*, *sprint*, and *dash*, in which the first term in each set is generic and the following are included.

In some instances the relations of inclusive and included meanings result in multilayered hierarchies or taxonomies, as in biological classifications involving orders, families, genera, and species. Overlapping meanings are also common, e.g. *speak / talk*, *love / like*, *big / large*, and *lake / pond*. Complementary relations in meaning include (1) polar opposites, e.g. *good / bad*, *tall / short*, and *yes / no*, (2) reversives, e.g. *tie / untie* and *encode / decode*, and (3) role-shifters, e.g. *buy / sell* and *borrow / lend*. And series may be (1) infinite, e.g. cardinal and ordinal numbers, (2) limited, e.g. a list of different kinds of roses, (3) repetitive, e.g. days of the week and months of the year, and (4) graded, e.g. *general*, *colonel*, *major*, *captain*, *lieutenant*, *sergeant* and *private*.

A set of meanings constitutes a semantic domain or subdomain because they have certain "shared" semantic features. What distinguishes the meanings from each other are the "distinctive" or "diagnostic" semantic features. But there may be some additional semantic features which are not required to distinguish meanings, but which may be psychologically and pragmatically very impor-

tant. For example, in distinguishing the meanings of *run* and *walk* as linear movement by a human being, the distinctive semantic feature is the relation of the lower limbs to the supporting surface. In running there are repeated instants in which neither foot is in touch with the ground, while in walking at least one foot is always in touch. In general, however, people distinguish running from walking on the basis of speed. This is certainly an important feature, but not necessarily a diagnostic one, since some people can walk faster than others can run. But to neglect such an important "supplementary" semantic feature would be irresponsible. It is also possible to recognize the latent significance of supplementary semantic features in the figurative extensions of meaning. For example, in the expression *he ran for mayor*, the use of the verb *run* seems appropriate since *run*, in contrast with the meanings of such lexemes as *walk*, *stroll*, *amble*, and *parade*, suggests features of competition and considerable expenditure of energy, which may be regarded as supplementary features of *run*.

Not only do the meanings of different lexemes form semantic domains, but the different meanings of the same lexeme may exhibit several different kinds of semantic relations: strings, galaxies, and constellations. The different uses of *run* in the following contexts form a string of relatively close meanings: *the man ran*, *the man ran the horse* (i.e. the man caused the horse to run), *the man ran the machine* (i.e. caused the machine to move internally or in space), and *the man ran the office* (i.e. controlled the operation of the office, which may involve little or no movement in space).

The meanings of a verb such as *get* may be described as a rather amorphous constellation with no obvious central meaning to which all the meanings are related, e.g. *he got the ice cream at the supermarket* (involving going and obtaining), *he got married* (a change of state), *he got the fire to burn* (to cause an activity), and *I get you* (to understand).

In many cases there is a central core of meaning to which the other meanings are related as a type of galaxy, e.g. *good* in such contexts as *good man*, *good name*, *good risk*, *good figure*, *good day*, *good at arithmetic*, *the guarantee is good for a year*, and *good for you*!

In order to determine whether different meanings of a particular verbal form are related, some people depend primarily upon the history of a word. For example, when they read in a dictio-

nary that two quite different meanings of *duck* are related: (1) a designation for a particular kind of water fowl and (2) a quick action, normally involving lowering one's position, as a means of avoiding danger, they assume that the two meanings must be related to the feeding habits of ducks. But for the average user of the English language, there are no shared semantic features to bring these two meanings together, because very few people associate the feeding habits of ducks with those of the quick avoidance of a blow. Accordingly, if a lexicographer is to reflect realistically what is going on in the English language from the viewpoint of the average user, these two meanings will be analyzed as belonging to two distinct lexemes.

The etymological developments of words are often quite interesting, but the history of a word does not necessarily determine its present-day usage. The historical or diachronic development of a word can provide interesting data about semantic relations, but diachronic features do not determine or govern synchronic usage. Perhaps the best illustration of this problem is found in the semantic development of the term *bar*, which in its earliest meaning represented a relatively long stiff piece of wood or metal used to obstruct passage. Several meanings of *bar* are closely related to this meaning, e.g. *his background should not be a bar to his success*, *she should not be barred entrance to this society*, *he owns three gold bars*, and *here is a bar of soap*. But the meaning of *bar* in the phrase *he is now a member of the bar*, referring to his entry into the legal profession, is historically related to the original meaning in view of the bars of ancient courts which separated sections of the courtroom. Similar types of bars were employed in drinking establishments, but the range of reference for *bar* was extended to the counter where drinks are served and later to the room or building containing such a counter. What started out as a single lexeme with a set of recognized series of related meanings has become three quite different unrelated meanings, for which most speakers of English see no shared semantic features. Accordingly, the form *bar* becomes three homophonous lexemes with completely unrelated meanings.

In some instances it may be useful to distinguish three different sets of relations between a lexeme and its referent: iconic, indexical, and conventional. The iconic relation is based on similarity, e.g. *choo-choo*, *put-put*, *clickety-clack*, and *cuckoo*. The indexical relation is based on a pointing relation, as in *here*, *there*,

*this*, *that*, *I*, *you*, *they*, and *who*, involving pointing within a verbal text or in the setting of a discourse. Most lexemes, however, have a purely conventional relation to their referents, that is to say, the forms of the lexemes are related to the referents in an essentially arbitrary manner.

The meanings of idioms involve the same problems of meaning as are found in words. But analyzing the meanings of idioms is more complex since for the most part the meanings are very specific and culturally conditioned. In Shilluk, a Nilotic language of the Sudan, forgiveness is expressed as "spitting on the ground in front of someone." This idiom reflects the practice in traditional trials in which after the sentence was determined, fines paid, and punishment meted out, the plaintiff and the defendant had to spit on the ground in front of each other to show that the case was terminated and that the accusations could never be brought into court again. Similarly, in Haitian Creole "to pick up a lightning stone" represents the action of finding and picking up an ancient artifact and in doing so to make oneself a healer.

In determining the meanings of non-idioms there are normally plenty of semantically related lexemes, the meanings of which contrast in various ways. These provide an important basis for determining the distinctive features of any one lexeme. But in the case of idioms the number of semantically related idioms is usually very limited. For translators the problems of the semantic content of idioms is especially acute, since their rendering by nonidiomatic expressions results in a serious loss of impact. A careful study of the idiomatic expressions within any two languages does, however, reveal a number of significant parallels. Although it is rather meaningless or misleading to translate literally into Spanish the idiom *mind your own business*, one can say *no meta su cuchara en mi taza* "don't put your spoon in my cup."

## 2.1 Major Features of Designative Meaning

It may be useful at this point to summarize some of the major features of designative meanings and their analysis: (1) the indefinite boundaries of meaning, (2) fuzzy sets of meanings, (3) shifts in the number and types of distinctive features, (4) inherent difficulties in determining the distinctive features, (5) obligatory and optional features, (6) numerous vs. limited meanings, (7) generic vs. specific meanings, and (8) meaning vs. reference.

The boundaries of meaning are indefinite in two senses: (a) it may be difficult to determine just where the range of meaning ends, as in the case of English words such as *good*, *like*, and *make*, and (b) the semantic range of all lexemes is always potentially open, in the sense that any lexeme may be extended to include referents which are semantically close. Some of the most radical extensions of meaning occur in lyric poetry, where there is always the need to describe human experience in new ways, and in scientific writing, where there is a constant need to explain new phenomena by means of existing words.

The sets of meanings are almost always fuzzy, since it is difficult to determine in most instances those specifically diagnostic features which separate one set of meanings from another. Accordingly, semantic domains tend to overlap, even as the areas of meaning of many lexemes overlap. This means that there are always alternative possibilities for the grouping of meanings, especially on the borders of a semantic domain.

The shifts in the number and types of semantic features are well illustrated in the meanings of *run*, *get*, *bar*, *law*, and *whisper*. As already noted in the case of *bar*, there may be complete replacement. Of the basic semantic features of *whisper* in ordinary contexts, namely, low volume and without vibration of the vocal chords, only the optional feature of negative verbal content is left in the expression *whisper campaign*.

People are often entirely unaware of the distinctive semantic features of words. This becomes painfully evident in the extreme difficulty which many people have in trying to define the meanings of words. They generally use such words correctly, but to identify the distinctive features is quite a different matter.

One reason for the difficulty in determining distinctive features is that some of these features may seem irrelevant. For example, in the plural formations of some nouns in Cherokee a distinction depends upon whether or not the animals in question produce their young in litters. In ! Kung Bushman an important distinction in entities is based on whether or not the objects in question have legs. But this distinction involves a wide semantic extension of the meaning of legs, since it includes such entities as trucks, cars, trees (in contrast with bushes), poles, and airplanes.

Obligatory features are usually much easier to analyze than optional ones, which may only occur in rare contexts. For exam-

ple, in the meaning of *skip* as a designation for a particular type of movement in space, there is an optional or supplementary feature of happy activity, which becomes relevant in certain contexts, e.g. *they skipped around as though the money tree would keep on showering dollar bills forever*.

Some lexemes have numerous meanings and others have very limited meanings. For example, terms such as *head*, *run*, *get*, *fine*, and *in* have numerous distinct meanings, while others, e.g. *quiver*, *jacaranda*, *propitiate*, and *exemplary* have only one or two meanings. This distinction in the number of meanings is not, however, equivalent to the semantic range of a particular meaning of a lexeme. For example, the lexeme *entity* has essentially only one meaning, but the number of different objects which can be represented by such a highly generic meaning of a term is almost unlimited.

## 3. Basic Analytical Principles

There are a number of basic principles which are relevant to the process of analyzing the meanings of lexemes. These can be summarized briefly in the following statements:

1. The correct meaning of a lexeme in any one context is the one which fits the context best. This means that the role of the context is maximized and the role of the individual lexemes is minimized.

2. Unless otherwise contextually marked, the central or core meaning of a term (often called the "unmarked meaning" ) is to be assumed as correct. This means that peripheral and figurative meanings are almost always marked by the context.

3. In any one context a lexeme is likely to have only one meaning unless multiple meanings are in some way indicated by the immediate or broader contexts.

4. No two lexemes in a language have exactly the same meanings. This means that there are no absolute synonyms, but that in either designative and / or associative meanings there are some distinctions. At times the difference is only in terms of the level of language. For example, in the phrases *dried prunes* and *dessicated prunes* the attributives *dried* and *dessicated* have essentially the same designative meanings, but they differ significantly in associative meanings since they represent two quite different levels of language.

5. No two words in any two languages are completely identical in meaning. This means that to some extent there is always some loss or skewing of meaning in interlingual communication. One purpose of translating is to keep such disparities at a minimum.

Chapter 5

# The Structures and Meaning of Syntax

Syntax is the set of relations existing between lexemes and between groups of lexemes. These relations may be contextually linear, that is, in the sequence of lexemes (syntagmatic), or they may be substitutionary (paradigmatic), e.g. the use of a pronoun to refer to a noun. As already noted, the relations are usually between binary sets, but they may also consist of series, e.g. *oranges, apples, pears, and plums*. Such series, however, can also be treated as unfolding binary sets.

Since there are a great many more kinds of relations between lexemes than there are specific syntactic constructions, there is a good deal of polysemy or ambiguity in syntax. The obscurities and ambiguities of grammar are often regarded as a serious logical deficiency, but they can also be regarded as a psychological necessity. If there were as many different syntactic constructions as there are different relations, the syntactic apparatus of a language would be entirely too cumbersome to manage. In a sense this disparity between the number of grammatical constructions and the number of meaningful relations is similar to what occurs in lexemes, which are limited in number but which may be used to represent an infinite number of referents.

The so-called "possessive'*s*" construction in English illustrates very well the considerable diversity of meaning to be found in what is generally considered to be a single syntactic construction. In the following series of phrases beginning with *his*, the descriptions of the relations identify the pronominal element *his* as *1* and the following element as *2*:

1. his car: 1 owns 2
2. his house: 1 owns 2, or 1 lives in 2, or 1 both owns and lives in 2
3. his arm: 2 is a part of 1
4. his father: 1 and 2 are biologically related
5. his partner: 1 and 2 join in certain activities
6. his country: 1 is a legal entity of 2
7. his work: 1 does 2, or 1 produced 2 (e.g. a painting)
8. his boss: 2 controls the activities of 1

9. his punishment: 1 experiences 2, or, possibly, 1 does 2 (e.g. his punishment of the criminal)
10. his name: 1 is known by 2, or 2 is a sign of 1
11. his enemy: 2 is hostile to 1
12. his friend: 1 and 2 presumably like and benefit each other
13. his God: 1 worships 2, or, as in some cultures, 2 rewards and/or punishes 1
14. his heir: 1 named 2 to receive benefits when 1 dies
15. his wife: 1 is the husband of 2, of 1 and 2 are related by marriage
16. his memory: 1 has the faculty 2, or 2 is the content of what 1 knows
17. his growth: 1 experiences 2
18. his attacker: 2 does something to 1
19. his folly: 1 does something with the characteristic of 2
20. his party: 1 is a member of 2 (e.g. political party), or 1 puts on 2 (e.g. pays for 2), or 1 is the honored guest at 2

In a number of languages one or more of these phrases must be expressed by means of a quite different type of construction. For example, *his car* is regarded as an example of an alienable possession, while *his arm* is inalienable and accordingly expressed in a different manner. A phrase such as *his work* would be rendered as "what he does" or "what he made." And *his name* is "what he is called." In many languages one cannot "possess God," but may in fact be "possessed by God." *His folly* is very likely to be rendered as "the foolish things which he has done."

## Major Syntactic Structures

All languages have structures which are syntagmatic (words following one another) and those which are paradigmatic (words referring back or forward to other words, e.g. *he* referring back in a text to *the man*, and *it* referring ahead in the sentence *it is a shame to live like that*). Within the class of syntagmatic semantic structures all languages have three major types: propositional, axial, and restrictive (or specificational), which can be readily illustrated by means of English. Some important variations of these major types will also be noted.

The following description of universal syntactic relations is not, however, concerned with the particular formal structures or with their underlying generative processes, but with their basic se-

mantic relations, since these are the crucial features for any translator. The formal correspondences between syntactic structures in two different languages can be very misleading. For example, the statement *Everyone will be here by eight o'clock tomorrow* may appear to be a simple statement of a future situation, but it is more likely to be a command for a specific action on the part of listeners, especially if the statement is made by someone in authority who can penalize those who do not conform.

The propositional structures are of two major types: (1) participational, e.g. *John ran* (agent + activity) and *John died* (experiencer − activity), and (2) equational, e.g. *John is a doctor* (the entity *John* belongs to a class of *doctors*), *John is tired* (John experiences a state), *John is tall* (an inherent characteristic of John), and *the doctor is John Thompson* (identity, since *the doctor* is identical with *John Thompson*).

The axial structures (often spoken of as "relation-axis" constructions) are primarily (1) spatial, principally a relation to an entity, e.g. *in the house*, *through the town*, *beside the tree*, (2) temporal, primarily a relation to an activity or state, e.g. *during lunch*, *when tired*, *while sick*, (3) consequential, the relation between many activities, e.g. *he died because the mine exploded*, and (4) coordinating (including serial), e.g. additive *Bill and John*, alternative *come or go*, and exceptive *all except John*.

Although the most common subject participants in English propositions involving activities are agents and experiencers, instruments may also be subjects of a few verbs, e.g. *a key unlocked the trunk*, *the rock smashed the window*, and benefactees may be subjects as a special type of experiencers, e.g. *Beatrice was given a car*. Instruments and benefactees may also be related to activities in the predicate, e.g. *unlocked the trunk with a key* and *a car was given to Mary*.

The most common experiencer participant in English propositions occurs in so-called "passive constructions," e.g. *John was hit*, *the dog was killed*, and *the woman was kidnapped*. But some constructions which are active in form may nevertheless be passive in meaning, e.g. *he received a beating*, meaning "someone beat him."

English employs many relational words, especially prepositions and conjunctions, and most of these relational words have a meaning which represents to some extent relations existing in the practical world of everyday experience, e.g. *through*, *around*,

*with*, *because*, *although*, *if*. But there are also some relational words which only mark relations within an utterance. For example, *to* may be used to mark the fact that what follows is an infinitive, and *that* may mark a following indirect discourse. The preposition *of* is likewise a semantically empty marker which merely signals the fact that what follows is in some way restrictively related to what precedes.

The so-called "attributive" constructions may be better spoken of as "restrictive" since they restrict the semantic range of a head expression, For example, in the phrase *three old men* the semantic range of *men* can potentially represent several billion persons, but the attributive *old* significantly restricts this range to a limited class, and the attributive *three* restricts the range even further. Similarly, in *ran fast* the attributive *fast* restricts the nature of the running.

The restrictive semantic relations also extend to such constructions as entities being restricted by activities, e.g. *traveling men*, *those men who came*, by other entities, e.g. *those in the house*, *Pennsylvania legislature*, and by characteristics, e.g. *some who were sick*, *healthy people*. Similarly, activities may be restricted by other activities, e.g. *come by flying*, by characteristics, e.g. *come quickly*, *may come*, *come if possible*, and by entities, e.g. *ran home*, *reached the lake*. Characteristics may likewise be restricted by entities, e.g. *jade green*, *brick red*, *fine for Jane*, *beautiful on Janet*, by activities, e.g. *excellent for traveling*, *good for a picnic*, and by other characteristics, e.g. *very good*, *exceptionally small*.

A special set of relations exists between verbs of communicating and the content of the communication, whether represented by a name, e.g. *he announced the decision*, or in direct or indirect form, e.g. *he said*, *"I will go" or he said he would go*. Because of the fixed nature of the verbal content and its repeatable nature, it is often treated as a verbal artifact, and accordingly as a special type of entity.

The above lists of typical syntactic relations in English are by no means complete, but they do illustrate some of the important sets of semantic relations which exist between grammatical units. It is important to note, however, that this classification of syntactic relations is semantic rather than formal. The term *picnic*, whether employed as a noun, e.g. *the picnic was great*, or as a verb, e.g. *let's picnic beside the stream*, represents an activity.

The word *run* in most contexts represents an activity, but it may represent an entity, e.g. *he lives up the run* and *he built a run beside the chicken house*. In the first context any relation to the running of water has been lost for most speakers of English, but in the second context the construction, which is primarily an entity, does involve a secondary feature of activity, since it is a place for chickens to run about. This use of *run* is semantically complex and may be designated as both an entity and an implied activity.

The distinction between formal and semantic features of syntax is clearly illustrated in such phrases as *begin to work*, *stop walking*, and *continue typing*. Viewed in terms of the formal structure, the verbs *begin*, *stop*, and *continue* are the heads of the constructions, and the following infinitives and gerunds are the "complements." But semantically the verbs *begin*, *stop*, and *continue* are really aspects of the following activities. That is to say, they constitute characteristics of activities rather than being activities themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that in many languages these aspectual features are represented by affixes rather than by free forms.

## Processes of Truncation, Intrusion, and Extrapositioning

Part of the difficulty involved in analyzing the syntactic structure of a language is the result of three important processes which occur in all languages, namely, truncation (the dropping of certain elements in particular types of contexts), intrusion (the embedding of elements which are not an integral part of the syntactic structure), and extrapositioning (typical of many so-called "topic-comment" structures).

One of the most common types of truncation involves ellipsis, which may be of two distinct types: (1) one in which the context provides clear evidence for "filling in" the zero, e.g. *Bill runs a mile much faster than John*, and (2) one in which the context provides no indication of what is missing, and as such often produces more impact, e.g. *if you do that, I'll ...* (the lack of a specific threat can usually be more threatening than if one were specified). Heavy ellipsis is responsible for so-called gnomic expressions, e.g. *first come first served*, and for some seemingly anomalous constructions, e.g. prepositional phrases constituting the sub-

ject of a sentence: *From New York to Philadelphia is ninety miles* in place of the more traditional expression *The distance from New York to Philadelphia is ninety miles*.

In conversations truncation may be extreme, as in a typical case of bargaining between persons symbolized as S (the seller) and B (the buyer):

B: How much?
S: Dollar a bunch.
B: Too much.
S: But good quality.
B: Too wilty.
S: You say how much.
B: Seventy-five.
S: Maybe eighty.
B: O.K. Here.

In some languages truncation may be a standard feature of some types of expressions in certain contexts. For example, in Mandarin Chinese the subject of a sentence is often omitted if the linguistic or practical context can supply it, and this may carry over into translations in English. For example, a banner on the entrance to a prestigious hotel in Guangzhou read *WELCOMES GENERAL ELECTRIC ENGINEERS*. Since it would be obvious that the subject of the welcoming would have to be the hotel, naming the hotel as subject would be both superfluous and anomalous.

The process of intrusion is often spoken of as "parenthesis," in which phrases and even complete sentences may be inserted into a sentence structure. In most instances such expressions are clarifications or added data which seem to be relevant, e. g. *Don Williams — he really is a great guy — came to see us yesterday evening*. But some intrusions are only secondarily related to the content, e. g. *As I was about to say — but why the hell am I telling you this — he demanded ten thousand grand*.

In conversation the words of one speaker may intrude into the statement of someone else. For example, a person may interrupt another speaker by such comments as *Don't tell me that one*! or *You don't say*!

The use of certain exclamatives, e.g. *hell*, *damn it*, *oh God*, *ouch*, and *eek*, within a sentence may usually be best interpreted simply as intrusives.

The use of extrapositioning is the major feature of so-called

"topic-comment" structures, in which one or more elements in a sentence may be placed in a first and emphatic position as the topic of the following comment, e. g. *John, what a fool he is! Ten dollars, that's enough. John Black, I know him.* Some languages make extensive use of such extrapositioning, e. g. Chinese and Japanese, and accordingly speakers of these languages frequently speak English with a good deal of extrapositioning, e. g. *Mr. Peng, I know. His statement, I not believe. Stay till midnight, he doesn't do that.*

## Formal Features Marking Syntactic Units

The formal features of language which serve to mark the relations between and the borders of syntactic units are primarily order, agreement, and intonation (including both contours and pauses).

Since syntagmatically related words must be in some order and since the words or groups of words which are most closely related to one another tend to be juxtaposed, order is a very important factor in marking various layers of syntactic relations. A language such as English, which has lost most of its affixes marking government and agreement, must rely primarily on order and the various semantic dependencies (which words qualify other words and which words govern other words) in order to know which words go with which other words. As a result, English has developed a rather fixed order of words, as compared, for example, with Latin and Greek, in which the affixes show which words are nouns, adjectives, and verbs and how these different classes of words relate to one another. Latin and Greek can afford to have a relatively free order of words, since the inflections usually show which words go toghther.

Agreement is a process in which relations are marked by employing forms having the same syntactic categories, e.g. *these boys* (sharing the categories of plurality) and *he comes* (sharing the categories of third person and singularity). In some languages, however, agreement is a dominant syntactic process. For example, in a number of the Bantu languages of Africa there may be a dozen or so classes of nouns with distinctive singular and plural prefixes. All adjectives which are grammatically related to such nouns must also have the same prefixes, and any pronouns, whether independent or prefixial to verbs, must have corresponding forms. *In Yipounou, a Bantu language of the. Gabon, the phrase dibaandu dibilimba biandi* "beginning of his signs" contains two sets of

prefixes showing agreement. The noun *dibaandu* "beginning" belongs to a class of nouns having *di*-in the singular, but the word *dibilimba* "sings" has two prefixes showing agreement: *di*-showing agreement with the preceding *dibaandu* and *bi*-the basic plural prefix for the stem-*limba*. The final word *biandi* "his" has the prefix *bi*-to show agreement with the noun *bilimba* "sings."

Intonation is a very important feature of syntactic marking, but it is often overlooked in describing grammatical relations. The kinds of "pause pitches" which occur within a sentence are often crucial in marking relations between words and groups of words. For example, the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a pause pitch in English makes the difference between nonrestrictive and restrictive meaning. Compare, for example, the two expressions: *the idea, which he expressed in simple terms, is extremely relevant* and *the idea which he expressed in simple terms is extremely relevant*. In the first case the clause *which he expressed in simple terms* is merely an additional fact about the idea, but it in no way defines the idea as one which is specifically stated in simple terms. In the second case the clause defines specifically what idea is involved. Traditional punctuation does not, however, accurately reflect the intonational patterning, since in both cases there may be a pause pitch after *terms*, but no comma is generally used for the second type of sentence.

Groups of lexemes are often quite clearly marked by intonational contours, with the high point of the contour on the last structurally dominant lexeme. For example, in the sentence *when John entered, we were all shocked by his haggard appearance*, there would normally be three contours, peaking on *entered*, *shocked*, and *appearance*. But the peaks of contours may be shifted for the sake of special contrastive emphasis.

The shapes of contours may also mark expressions as consisting of various discourse types, e. g. interrogations, commands, pleas, suggestions, and emphatic declarations. This role of contours to mark different interpretations of a text is, however, primarily a matter of discourse and not a feature of syntax.

## The Semantic Analysis of Typical Syntactic Constructions

For many translators the formal features of language often

seem both obvious and largely irrelevant. What appear to be clearly more important are the meaningful relations between words and groups of words, and these are often not at all obvious because the same formal arrangement of words may have so many different possible meanings.

Since all languages express more syntactic relations than they have distinct constructions, ambiguity is inevitable. What a translator needs is a method for sorting out the possible semantic differences, and then selecting that meaningful relation which is most in keeping with the context, both immediate and general. One of the most satisfactory ways of dealing with these problems of syntactic ambiguity and obscurity is to analyze meanings on the basis of the four major semantic classes: entities, activities, characteristics, and relations.

The following sections illustrate the procedures for understanding the semantic relations in four major types of constructions: (1) pronouns or nouns with an-'*s* suffix followed by a noun, (2) noun-noun constructions in which the first noun is restrictively related to the second, (3) adjective-noun constructions, and (4) phrases employing *of* in which the second element is restrictively related to the first.

The simplest construction to illustrate some of the problems of semantic relations between words has already been noted in the first part of this chapter, namely, the so-called "possessive construction" employing *his*. In the set *his car*, *his father*, *his arm*, the pronoun *his* may be regarded as both an entity (E, the person) and a relation (R, the-*s* suffix), and as already noted, the semantic relation in *his car* may be defined as "1 possesses 2," while the relation in *his father* may be defined as "1 and 2 are biologically related," and the relation in *his arm* may be defined as "2 is a part of 1."

In the phrases *his arrival* and *his punishment*, involving entities and activities, the relations between 1 and 2 are quite different. In *his arrival* "1 does 2" but in *his punishment* "1 experiences 2." In the phrase *his attacker* the term *attacker* is both an entity (E) and an activity (A), which can be symbolized by the formula E-A, in which the entity constituent is placed first since it represents the final derived form, and the activity is placed second since it is the base for the derivative. But in *his attacker* it is the E of *attacker* which does A (the activity) to the entity in *his*.

The semantically complex nature of *attacker* is quite evident from the formal structure of derivation, but in *his boss* the complex nature of *boss* (involving both entity and activity, as a person who bosses) is not so evident because of the zero derivation. In the phrase *his folly* the term *folly* is also semantically complex since it represents an activity (something which is done) which has the characteristic of being foolish and may be symbolized by the formula A - C.

In the phrases *his heir* and *his gift* both *heir* and *gift* are semantically complex and consist of an entity and an activity, symbolized as E - A. In *his heir* the entity in *his* is the person who will receive the inheritance. But in *his gift* the entity in *his* may be either the one receiving what has been given by someone else or the one who engages in the activity of giving something.

The relations become much more complex in a phrase such as *his old servant*, in which *servant* is an entity with an underlying activity (E - A), *his* represents an entity who may be said to "command" the *servant*, but the entity in *servant* actually serves the entity in *his*. The adjective *old* is semantically ambiguous, since it may be a characteristic of the entity in *servant* (that is, an old person) or a characteristic of the activity in *servant*, namely, having served formerly or for a considerable period of time. The phrase *their beloved commander* has a similarly complex set of semantic relations, which may be symbolized as E - A, A, E - A, in which the entity in *their* experiences affection for the entity in *commander*, but it is the entity in *commander* which commands the entity in *their*. Furthermore, there is the implication that something in the activity of the *commander* must have given rise to the experience of affection by the entities represented by *their*.

Noun-noun phrases in which the first element is suffixed by-*'s* are often more complex than those with a pronoun as a first element, since the range of possible relations is potentially much greater. Since, however, the suffix -*'s* only marks a restrictive relation and does not directly affect the semantic relation, it is not always necessary to include it in a semantic formula. But for the sake of consistency it may be useful to list the relational element. For example, in the phrase *the world's poor*, for which the semantic formula would contain C (the characteristic of definiteness), E - R (*world's*, an entity and a relation), E - C (an entity

of persons and a condition of poverty), the semantic relation can be described as "1 specifies 2 + 3" ; "3 (*poor*) are in 2" or "3 live throughout 2." But in *life's illusions* (A – R, the process of living, and A – C, experiencing what seems to be true, but is not) the relation between *life's* and *illusions* may be defined as either "during 1, people experience 2" or "the events of 1 cause 2."

In these semantic formulas for syntactic relations the symbol C stands for either an inherent characteristic or a condition. Both of these features are essentially abstracts because they are nothing in and of themselves, but are always a feature of something else, Furthermore in many contexts it is difficult to determine whether the abstract is a characteristic or a condition. From the standpoint of the syntactic relations which may be involved, there would be no essential difference between an inherent characteristic or a condition. The only possible complication may result from the fact that a condition or state is the implied result of certain prior events.

The correct definition of the semantic relations between the constituent parts of a phrase frequently depends upon the broader context. In the phrase *the land's productivity* it is impossible to determine whether *productivity* is simply an activity (A)or the result of an activity, namely the entities which are produced. And for a phrase such as *virtue's reward* (A – C, the characteristic activity of an implied entity, and A – E, an activity that may involve an entity) the number of possible relations is even greater: "people experience 2 because or 1" of "1 results in 2" or "if people do 1, they will receive 2," and "1 can itself be 2."

For the following expressions only the relation between the two nouns is stated (in all the phrases with the article *the*, this characteristic of definiteness restricts primarily the range of the first noun and only secondarily the second noun):

the house's foundation "2 is a part of 1"
the society's demise "1 experiences 2"
the journey's end "2 is an aspect of 1"
technology's future "what 1 will be like at the time of 2"
people's mistakes "1 does 2" (the term *mistakes* can be analyzed as consisting of A-C, activities characterized by significant error)
the book's contents "1 contains 2"
the member's speech "1 produces 2"
Africa's role "1 does 2" (*Africa* is semantically complex in

that the name of a continent represents the people living there)

In so-called "noun-noun" constructions in which the first element restricts the second, the possibilities for a variety of semantic relations are even greater than in the case of nouns marked by the -'*s* suffix. For example, the phrase *market economy* might appear to some people to consist of an entity and a condition (a characteristic resulting from certain events), but as this phrase is generally used, it consists of two closely related activities. The constituent *market* represents the activities of buying and selling based on supply and demand, and *economy* represents the system of exchange of objects and services. Similarly, the phrase *chain reaction* would appear to be a combination of an entity and an activity, but in this phrase *chain* is no longer a sign for an entity, but for a feature of linked succession, and as such it is best regarded as a C qualifying the series of mutually dependent events represented by *reaction*.

One significant advantage of this approach to semantic relations based on entities, activities, characteristics (including conditions), and relations is that one is often forced to decide precisely what is being talked about. For example, in the phrase *science instructor* it is easy enough to recognize that *instructor* consists of an entity (the teacher) and an activity (teaching), but what is *science*? For some people *science* is a body of knowledge and for others simply the name of a course offered in school. But basically *science* is an activity, a systematic way of engaging in and understanding events.

As in the case of the previous set of illustrative phrases, the following are listed with a formula representing the semantic classes of the constituent parts and followed by a statement of the semantic relations between the two parts, and sometimes with an added comment about any special problems which need to be taken into consideration:

tank armor "2 is a part of 1"
emergency measures "2 is because of 1" or "2 is for the sake of 1"
word problem "1 is the source of 2"
world knowledge "2 is about 1"
mirror image "1 is a characteristic of 2" (in this phrase *mirror* does not directly represent a mirror as an entity but only as a kind of left-right reversal typical of mirror reflections)
translation principles "2 governs 1"

context markers "2 indicates features of 1"
drama translation "X (an unspecified entity) does 2 to 1"
court etiquette "2 is characteristic behavior in or during 1"
conference interpreter "2 does X as a part of 1"

For a series of phrases consisting of adjectives restricting the semantic range of following nouns, it may only be necessary to describe the semantic relation between the parts and to add some notes with respect to special difficulties. Some adjective-noun phrases are, however, notoriously ambiguous. For example, the phrase *American linguistics* may be understood to mean the kind of linguistics undertaken by Americans or the scientific study of languages spoken in the Americas. The phrase *international agency* is even more polysemic: "2 deals with activities in 1," "2 is authorized by entities in 1," "2 consists of people from 1," or various combinations of these sets of relations.

One of the most deceptive aspects of adjective-noun phrases is the frequent occurrence of adjectives representing entities rather than characteristics. For example, the phrase *social costs* is about costs to a society (an entity) and *public opinion* is what people (entities) think. Some phrases, however, turn out to be idioms since the meaning of the combination is different from the sum of the parts, e.g. *civil service*, in which 1 is not a characteristic of 2, but designates "people (entities) who work (activities) for the government (an entity)," or " the activity of government on a particular level," i.e. presumably below the level of policy making, but even these definitions would be questioned by many whose views of government enterprises and efficiency are strongly negative.

The adjective *expensive* in the phrase *expensive jewelry* may designate only the quality of the jewelry, or it may mean that someone paid a lot of money for the jewelry, despite the fact that it is not necessarily of high quality. Similarly. *global* in the phrase *global production* may designate what is produced throughout the world, or it may designate only a total volume of something. The term *production* is also ambiguous in this phrase since it represents either the entities which are produced or the process of producing.

Many adjectives designate a state or condition, and as a result they imply certain events or activities which have given rise to the condition. For example, in the phrase *desperate farmers* the attributive is semantically a condition, but implies some prior events which have caused such a condition. But in the phrase *protective*

*measures* both constituents designate activities, since *measures* involve activities designed to accomplish certain results and *protective* indicates the purpose of such measures, namely, to protect something.

Some adjectives may actually represent relations, e.g. *mutual assistance*. The constituent *mutual* merely indicates that the activity of providing and receiving assistance is reciprocal and that the relation between agent and experiencer is bidirectional, that is, goes in two directions.

For the following adjective-noun phrases only the definition of the relation is given, except where the semantic class or classes of the constituent parts may be especially important:

Asian silk "2 is from 1" or "2 is typical of what comes from 1"

African history "2 is an account of what happened in 1" or "2 consists of the events which have taken place in 1" or "2 is the way in which people in 1 view events which have taken place in 1"

fallow ground "1 is a condition of 2"

unequal access "the possibility of 2 is not the same (1) for all X's (unspecified entities)"

unknown person "1 is the condition of 2" or "no person knows 2"

stereotyped ideas "1 is a kind of 2" (the term *stereotyped* is semantically quite complex, since it implies mental activities, i.e. value judgments which are widely accepted, but wrong)

Probably the most complex and diverse semantic relations exist between the constituent parts of so-called "*of* phrases." The preposition *of* has become semantically reduced to a marker, since it no longer has any meaning other than to signal that a following constituent serves to restrict a preceding one.

The following are some of the most common types of relations, but in these constructions only the "head" words are taken into consideration:

1. "1 contains 2" : *book of illustrations*, *box of chocolates*
2. "2 is a characteristic of 1" : *book of importance*, *man of wealth*
3. "1 consists of 2" : *house of wood*, *fireplace of brick*
4. "1 is 2" : *country of Mexico*, *continent of Africa*
5. "1 does 2, but 2 characterizes 1" : *man of judgment*, *person of discretion*
6. "2 does 1" or "X (someone) does 1 to 2" : *judgment of John*, *love of Mary*

7. "1 is a measure of 2" or "1 contains 2" : *cup of tea*, *glass of milk*
8. "2 is a point of spatial reference for 1" : *south of Times Square*, *north of Seattle*
9. "2 takes place at 1" or "2 characterizes 1" : *hour of decision*, *time of trouble*
10. "1 is the constituency of 2" : *ten of them*, *few of his friends*, *all of his friends*
11. "1 is a part of 2" : *head of a pin* , *foot of the table*
12. "2 possesses 1" : *the wealth of the man*, *the car of my friend*
13. "1 is in 2" : *hills of Asia*, *plains of the Midwest*

Somewhat more complex sets of relations may be involved when one of the constituents of an *of* phrase is a nominalized verb, e.g. *the deception of riches* ( "riches deceive" ), *the description of the chemicals* ( "X does 1 to 2" ) and *the widening of the canal* ( "X causes 1 to happen to 2" ). But some of the more subtle problems of semantic relations occur when the first constituent is a characteristic or condition. For example, in the phrase *the result of his crime* the first part, namely, *the result*, is an unspecified type of condition or set of circumstances resulting from *his crime*. An equivalent rendering of this phrase in some languages would be "what he did that was wrong caused ..."

Similarly, in the phrase *the end of his illness* the constituent *illness* is a condition, but one which has a characteristic of duration. The constituent *end* serves then as a feature of this durative condition, similar to the relation in *end of a journey*. In some languages the closest equivalent to such an expression would be "when he was no longer ill."

Causative relations are often quite complicated because there are two different activities involved. For example, in the statement *he ran the horse* there is an activity involving what the causative agent does in making the horse run and there is another activity involved in the horse's running. The same is true of the statement *he ran the office*. Not only does the office engage in certain activities but so does the causative agent, namely, the manager. Two activities (first, a largely unspecified activity on the part of the causative agent, and second, an overt change of state) are also involved in such expressions as *he stopped the pain*, *he quieted the children*, *he pleased the crowd*, *they thrilled the audience*, and *he disappointed his friends*. In many languages the

causative relation must be lexically overt, e.g. "he caused the pain to end," "he made the children be quiet," "what he did made the crowd happy," "the audience was thrilled by what they did," and "his deed caused his friends to be disappointed."

It would be quite wrong to think that syntactic relations can be established without regard to the meanings of the lexemes involved. In all of these constructions the fundamental syntactic relation is one of restriction, but the semantic content of the lexemes makes it necessary to specify more accurately just what type of restriction is involved. Only then can a translator be prepared to find in a target language the equivalent type of syntactic structure. Those who argue for an independent of context-free syntax have not recognized how all the levels of language really are totally interrelated.

For the most part the meaningful relations within individual syntactic structures are not too difficult, and in most instances the task of understanding these relations does not require an elaborate method of analysis. But there are sometimes highly complicated strings of such phrases which may perplex even a professional translator as to the precise semantic relations. This seems to be especially common in so-called "technical" or "academic" writing or jargon.

An international agency charged with the task of providing farmers in the third world with information about better methods of farming and the need to conserve natural resources published a booklet which began with the following statement: *The reinforcing impacts of natural resource depletion and human destitution are exemplified by trends in the world's farmlands*. This sentence and the rest of the text, which was written in the same type of "academese," were supposed to be fully understandable to persons for whom English is a second language and to be the basis for translating into numerous local languages, most of which are completely unrelated to nay Indo-European language. Not only was such a text extremely difficult for the average person for whom it was intended, but it proved very difficult for a number of professional translators to understand correctly.

The primary reasons for the difficulty in readily understanding this sentence are the semantic complexity and generic level of the vocabulary, the nominalization of activities, reversal of old and new information, and the intricate syntactic relations between the words. In order to understand the basis for some of

these problems. it may be useful to examine in detail the classes of the semantic constituents of the words and their applicable paraphrases:

*the* : C "definite" (in view of the phrase *of ... destitution*)

*reinforcing*: A "causing a change of condition or state," C "a higher degree of some condition," and R "a reciprocal relation." In this context *reinforcing* means that "something causes some condition to become greater in a series of combined or reciprocal actions." The condition is the result of the *impacts*.

*impacts* : C "a condition resulting from an implied activity" or A "an activity producing a condition," and C "an intense degree of such a condition"

*of*: R "the relation between (1) the *impacts* and (2) the *depletion* and *destitution* which cause the *impacts*"

*natural*: C "a characteristic of entities which have not been man-made"

*resource* : E C C "entities which are potentially valuable"

*depletion* : A C "activity of causing something (the *resources*) to be dangerously diminished"

*and* : R "a coordinate relation"

*human* : E "people"

*destitution*: C "a condition of poverty" (as experienced by the people)

*are exemplified* : A "caused to be shown or recognized"

*by*: R "causation"

*trends*: A C "activities on an increasing or descending scale"

*in* : R "spatial"

*world's*: E – R "an entity related to *farmlands* as whole to part"

*farmlands*: E – A "people farm the lands"

In order to show more clearly the semantic relations of the words and phrases, to identify more specifically the nature of the referents, and to reflect more accurately the relation between old and new information, this sentence may be paraphrased (a form of intralingual translating) as "What is happening more and more in farmlands throughout the world shows the damage caused by the combination of severe poverty and the serious loss of natural resources."

In analyzing the meaning of any complex expression in a source language, a translator almost inevitably begins to think of

the semantic features of the words and the semantic relations of the grammar in terms of the manner in which such elements are expressed in the target language. This does not mean that a qualified translator must make a detailed study of each and every semantic feature (whether lexical or syntactic), but only of those features which seem to be unusually complex or obscure. The immediate result of such an analytical procedure is often expressed in an awkward form, and so a translator must restructure the initial results so as to conform to the stylistic requirements of the target language.

## Chapter 6

# The Structures and Meaning of Discourse

A discourse consists of a complete utterance (i. e. a text), anything from an isolated *Ouch*! to an entire poem, essay, conversation, lecture, or book. A discourse may have a single source, e.g. the author of a lyric poem, or a multiple source, whether alternating as in conversation or collaborating as in joint authorship of an article or book. In fact, the editorial process instituted by a publisher may be so elaborate and detailed as to suggest multiple authorship.

Discourses may be either oral or written, but written discourses always involve a serious reduction in the number and types of distinctive phonological features. Most intonational features are only sketchily marked, and punctuation marks rarely indicate all the significant phonological and semantic breaks. Furthermore, some of the important hesitations, false starts, and repetitions are omitted for the sake of orthographical correctness, but these paralinguistic features in oral communication are extremely useful for "reading between the lines." Accordingly, in written texts it is often necessary to compensate for the lack of paralinguistic cues by indicating how certain expressions are to be understood, e. g. by added words such as *in irony*, *sarcastically*, *with a smug smile*.

As has already been noted, discourses are structured, but not as an extension of syntax or as an elaboration of propositional logic. The structures of discourse are far more intricate and elaborate, and they often reflect such aesthetic features as unity, balance, and rhythm.

The different types of discourse are almost unlimited, e. g. narratives, letters, drama, history, poetry (epic, lyric, didactic), parodies, genealogies, riddles, proverbs, parables, allegories, laws, conversation, diatribe, lists, apocalyptic, epigrams, epitaphs, jokes, lectures, orations, sermons, manifestoes, and constitutions. Attempts have been made to classify all these types of discourses, but no system of classification is fully adequate since there are so many mixed types and so many different features and combinations of features which may be present in different gen-

res. Rather than try to classify the various discourse types, it is much more useful to study the basic features of discourses and their organizing principles. A person can then come much closer to an appreciation of the formal and semantic elements and an understanding of the ways in which these elements provide the basis for certain aspects of the designative and associative meanings.

Discourses are patterned arrangements of three different types of constituents: sounds, lexemes, and sentences. The significant features of sound consist primarily of (1) repetitions, e.g. alliterations and rhyme, (2) punning, the use of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning, and (3) sound symbolism, the use of words with sounds that reinforce lexical meaning, e.g. *snip-snap*, *zig-zag*, *jim-jams*, the *fl-* sound in *flare*, *flash*, *fly*, *flutter*, *flitter*, *flicker*, or the use of the *s-* sound to suggest the activity of a snake, as in *hissing*, *slithering*, *slippery*, *sneaking*.

From the standpoint of the discourse the selection of lexical features is for two purposes, namely, the designative and associative meanings, with the primary intent in effective discourse being the complementary nature of these meanings. For the designative meanings there are obvious purposes in the choice of clear or obscure meanings and of fitting or dissonant meanings. For the associative meanings the choice of lexemes involves such contrastive features as contemporary or archaic, local or exotic, generic or specific, and ordinary or esoteric, which may also be important in providing the semantic setting for the discourse.

The sentence types, e.g. simple or complex, straightforward or intricate, short or long, may also provide important clues to such types of style as plain, forceful, elevated, or decorative, with the following different corresponding types of communicative effectiveness: truthful, convincing, inspiring, and deceptive. Unfortunately, syntax has too long been studied in terms of its role in uttering "truth claims," i.e. in terms of the propositional truthfulness of its formal features, even though distinctive associative features often play a more crucial role in the effectiveness of any discourse.

## The Organizing Structures of Discourse

Discourse structures have often been described in terms of frames, schemata, scaffolding, and so-called "macro features."

But it may be useful to analyze these structures on a somewhat more basic level, namely, on the level of their fundamental framing components, which may be classified as primary and secondary. The primary features (time, space, and class) have unlimited possibilities for expansion, while the secondary features (rank, consequence, and dialogic sequencing) are either derivatives of the first set or come in limited sets.

Time is an integral feature of all kinds of discourses involving temporal sequencing: novels, short stories, personal accounts, epic poetry, how-to-do-it manuals, history, and even genealogies. Space is a fundamental feature of most descriptions of entities, e.g. people, buildings, landscapes, and even of discourses. In some societies it is also an important feature in myths. Class is an obvious fundamental factor in relations of coordination, including addition (*and*), alternation (*or*), and subtraction (*but*, *except*).

Rank is essentially an elaboration of the feature of class and is a well-known factor in many discourse sequences, e.g. less important to more important, generic to specific, dominant to subordinate, greater to lesser, etc. But consequence is a more restricted feature, although it is basically a matter of cause and effect, e.g. condition, concession, purpose, result, basis-assumption (e.g. *since George was in New York, he must have gone to the Metropolitan Art Gallery*). The features of consequence may, of course, involve not only a single sentence but an entire book. The first set of chapters may provide the reasons, and a set of final chapters may describe the results.

Dialogic sequencing involves two or more units in which each following unit is formally and semantically linked in various ways to the preceding, e.g. affirmations and negations, questions and answers, statements of similarity and differences, old and new information, intertextual dependencies (e.g. parodies, allusions, quotations), and stream of consciousness. This last dialogic set is perhaps the most confusing, since in many instances the relations seem to make little or no sense — the kinds of relations psychiatrists are paid to untangle.

Almost no discourse consists of a single type of feature, although grocery lists are perhaps the closest to a pure listing by class. But in making out such a list many housewives use the spatial relations in the supermarket to group the items. Even a genealogy is structurally somewhat complex since it involves class (a series of animate beings), arranged in a time sequence, with im-

plication of rank. Lyric poetry is often a description of personal feelings by means of one or more events (temporal units) which bear intriguing resemblances to an author's emotive state or to that of his or her projected persona.

The structures of novels and short stories have been studied and described more fully than most other discourses. The reason for this is that the principal features are usually more obvious: the typical sequence of steady state, complications, crisis, crucial decision and / or action, resolution, and resulting final state. But such narratives often include all the primary and secondary organizing structures: time( the temporal sequcnces, although often altered by flashbacks and flash-forwards), space (descriptions of settings), class (the classes of participants and their roles), rank (the ascending and descending series of events involving crisis and resolution), consequence (especially cause / effect and reason / result), and dialogic pairs (the essence of most reasoning and conversation, i.e. internalized and externalized communication).

## Rhetorical Features and Processes

In order to enhance the impact and appeal of a text, an author or speaker may employ a number of rhetorical features or processes, both formal and semantic. The principal formal features involve ordering, repetition, measurement (e.g. poetic lines), embedding, deletion / condensation, transition, reference, and nongrammaticality. The primary semantic features involve figurative language, parallelism / inversion, plays on words, ambiguity / obscurity, polar contrasts (paradox, irony), overstatement / understatement, euphemisms, shifts in grammatical function, indirection, specific for generic language, and semotactic anomalies.

The ordering of discourse units is an important device for marking importance and pointing out similarities and contrasts. In general, the initial position in a sentence, paragraph, or section is the most important, with the final position being second in importance. But any shifting of order from its more usual position is bound to carry some significance, whether positive or negative.

Ordering within a series may also suggest rank, e. g. from greatest to least or vice versa, or the order may be purposely random in order to emphasize the unranked character of the entities in question.

Repetition, whether of sounds (as in a newspaper headline

"*Paris Presents Postponed Picassos*" ), lexemes, grammatical structures, or themes, is widespread and often a means of emphasizing the importance of the elements in question. Contiguous repetition is usually more effective than noncontiguous repetition, and identical repetition generally has greater impact than partial repetition. In most languages of Western Europe, as well as in the songs of Africa and in the poetry of Indonesian languages, repetition in liturgical expressions is highly regarded, but in some cultures semantically parallel lines are considered tautologous and even insulting to an audience.

The measurement of discourse units in terms of poetic feet, phrases, or lines is a far more important element than most people realize, since they think of measured units almost entirely in terms of poetry in which periodicity is marked by feet based on stress, length, or prominence of vowels or syllables, or even on the sequencing of tone classes, as in classical Chinese. The repetition of such measured units constitutes the basis of rhythm, which is such an important, although often subtle, feature of prose as well as of poetry. The rhythmic alternation between tonic and atonic words (the stressed and unstressed lexemes) is crucial to good prose, and a similar rhythmic alternation between peaks and troughs of difficulty in understanding a text can be equally strategic. This means that good prose, as well as good poetry, should have phonological and semantic peaks and troughs so that a reader may be rhythmically challenged and permitted to relax as he or she reads a text.

Embedding is of two major types: interruptive and elaborative. Parenthetical statements are too often interruptive, but they may be helpfully elaborative (i. e. explanatory). In some instances an entire chapter of a book may be essentially elaborative or illustrative, as in the case of some of the parables of the New Testament or the chapter about the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Deletion / condensation is the primary feature of ellipsis, but it may be extended to the point of being a kind of "telegraphic style," consisting of much more than mere asyndeton, i,e. the loss of typical connectives. Some of Hemingway's short stories almost approach this level of deletion. Similarly, the reduction of an utterance to its bare bones, especially if there are features of parallelism and contrast, can be highly effective, as illustrated by traditional aphorisms, e. g. *first come*, *first served*, *better late than never*, *put up or shut up*, *take it or leave it*. Fresh condensa-

tions can also be very meaningful, e.g. *new protectionism*, *old sophistry*, and *slave and save or stuff and starve*. Certain forms of condensation are not the result of deletion or ellipsis, but of packing into a statement a maximum amount of information by leaving most entities implicit, as in the highly generic statement analyzed at the end of Chapter 5.

Transition is an important element in the connectedness of discourse units. This aspect of cohesion is performed largely by conjunctions (both coordinate and subordinate) which mark the relations between clauses and sentences. Transitional phrases, however, are also important, e.g. *as a result*, *with this in mind*, *in view of all that*. An even more effective technique is to anticipate a following paragraph by means of a concluding sentence in the previous paragraph or to anticipate a following series of paragraphs by means of an introductory paragraph outlining the following contents, as illustrated by this very section.

Reference is also one of the important devices in guaranteeing cohesion of a text. This is done primarily by the use of pronouns for nouns, pro-verbs for verbs, deictic lexemes (e.g. *this*, *that*, *here*, *there*, *near*, *far*), lexemes from the same semantic domain which may be used to represent the same referent but by means of different words (e.g. *the boss*, *the head of the firm*, *the chief executive officer*, *the owner of the business*).

Nongrammaticality may also play an important role in focusing attention on particular aspects of a text, especially in poetic discourse where liberties with syntax are often found. E.E. Cummings in syntax and Ogden Nash in unusual word formations are well known for their effective use of nongrammatical expressions. Radical and abrupt shifts in syntactic structure, often termed "anacoloutha," are also important formal techniques for heightening impact and appeal.

As should be quite evident from the preceding descriptions of largely formal rhetorical devices, their significance lies in their being unexpected. These exceptions from the norm acquire rhetorical force because they violate the "transitional probabilities" of information theory. Accordingly, the meaning which they have is largely associative rather than designative.

The most common and most effective semantic rhetorical device or process is figurative language: metaphor based on similarities of features and metonymy based on some type of association, e.g. part for the whole. Similes are simply metaphors marked by

terms such as *like*, *as though*, *similar*, *resembling*. Extended figurative language is common in parables and allegories. But there is a tendency to think of figurative language being restricted primarily to poetry and seldom found in scientific writing. This, however, is far from the truth. Note the following sentence from *The Lives of a Cell* by Lewis Thomas: "We live in a dancing matrix of viruses; they dart, rather like bees, from organism to organism, from plant to insect to mammal to me and back again, and into the sea, tugging along pieces of this genome, strings of genes from that, transplanting grafts of DNA, passing around heredity as though at a party."

A combination of formal and semantic parallelism can be very effective, e.g. *purgatory of passion or torment of tears*, *idols of wood or idols of words*. But some meanings can often be enhanced by an inverted arrangement in the order of at least some of the constituents, e.g. *Don't give dogs what is holy or cast your pearls before swine*. Positive / negative contrasts may also be organized in parallel structures, e.g. *One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing, while another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth* (Proverbs 13.7).

Plays on the meaning and formal resemblance of words (punning) is a universal phenomenon, and in some languages this rhetorical device is extensively encouraged and practiced. The Hebrew Bible has an abundance of such puns, especially in connection with the meaning of proper names. In fact, the name *Jacob* is interpreted as having two different popular etymologies: "to seize by the heel" and "to supplant." In Amos 5.5 the name of *Gilgal* is interpreted as meaning "go into exile" and *Bethel* (literally, "house of God") is reinterpreted as *Bethaven* (literally, "house of evil").

Purposeful ambiguity and obscurity are actually quite common. Political speeches and statements on governmental policies are in many instances designed so that they can be understood and defended in two quite different ways. Apocalyptic texts are notoriously obscure and open to various interpretations, and some poets make a virture out of being impossible to understand, e.g.

Nugatory purgatory
Dramaturgy right of clergy
Kerosene magazine
Thuribles in the clerestory

four lines of a poem by Philip Whalen, entitled *Technicalities of*

*Jack Spicer*. This type of text is extremely hard to translate if one attempts to preserve some of the rhythmic patterns and repetitions of sound. In fact, it may be better not to try, especially since the poem itself seems thematically impoverished.

The polar contrasts in paradox and irony are often extremely difficult to translate, since in paradox much of the truth, despite apparent falsehood, so often depends on subtle nuances of meaning in one or two words. And in irony it is difficult to represent orthographically the paralinguistic features which are so essential for recognizing the ironical nature of an oral message. In euphemisms the text says one thing, but the reference is to something else, which, if named directly, might appear to be crude and unseemly. Accordingly, *mass murders* are described as *liquidation of the opposition*, and *organized terrorism* can be referred to as *territorial pacification*.

Overstatement and understatement (hyperbole and litotes) seem to be universal devices for emphasis, with overstatement apparently far more common than understatement. The biblical statement about "*straining out gnats and swallowing camels*" is logically absurd, but it is communicatively very effective. A number of figurative expressions also involve hyperbole, e. g. *he climbed the wall*, *he hit the ceiling*, *he had to look up to see bottom*. Understatements often involve negation, e. g. *not bad*, meaning "quite good," and frequently must depend a good deal on context, e.g. *with thirty million in the bank*, *life can be bearable*.

The shifts in grammatical function can be especially useful as ways to highlight meaning, e. g. rhetorical questions which are not asking for information but are actually making an emphatic declaration (God's question to Job, *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth*? Job 38.4), declarative which are really imperatives (*I'll see you at 10:15 tomorrow at the judge's office*), and imperatives which are conditionals (*do that and I'll fire you*).

Indirection involves saying one thing while conveying a meaning which is consequentially related. If in response to a question about a New Yorker's financial state, a person replies, "He has a penthouse apartment on Park Avenue near 61st," that should be enough to reassure any questioner. Or if in response to a question about a couple's domestic difficulties, a person says, "Well, they have begun taking separate vacations," far more is communicated than what is said.

The use of specific, concrete vocabulary instead of employing highly generic terms and making broad impersonal statements can be very important in creating rhetorical impact and in this way getting attention. For example, in the July 18, 1990, number of the *Wall Street Journal*, an article on Japan's rebounding economy begins with a highly specific paragraph:

> Seiichi Suda's business is booming. The electronics factories the entrepreneur owns are operating flat out, and Mr. Suda is feeling prosperous enough that he just bought a slick $60,000 Nissan Infiniti, with ash-gray leather seats and a telephone.

The more picturable a statement is the more impact it usually carries. In fact, the detailed specificity of a statement makes it almost the equivalent of a picture. It is this graphic quality which is a major feature of lyric poetry and memorable essays.

The use of semantically anomalous combinations of words is also a means of highlighting the significance of what is being said. Phrases such as *beautifully hideous*, *generous miser*, *juicy wind*, and *suicide blond* all scream for attention, but obviously too many of these can produce serious obscurity, as in Gregory Corso's poem *Spontaneous Requiem for the American Indian*, which speaks of *heraldic henequen tubas whittled in coyote tune*.

Personification and reification (treating people as things) appear to exist in all language-cultures, but the extent to which such processes are employed seems to differ widely. In many languages the treatment of animals as human beings is so extensive as to constitute one of the major literary genres, but the treatment of abstracts such as wisdom, beauty, and grace as human beings is much rarer. In academic writing there is a marked tendency to reify people, that is, to treat them as though they were only impersonal objects and best described by statistics and charts. This is precisely the difference between studies of human behavior in a novel and in a book on sociology — with more insight often in the novel.

## Differences in the Functions of Formal and Semantic Rhetorical Processes

Although the various rhetorical processes reviewed in the pre-

vious section appear to be universals, the functions of these processes are by no means the same in all language-cultures. Semantic parallelism is repudiated in some cultures as being an insult to the intelligence of an audience. If a statement has been made once, why should an audience be imposed upon by its repetition? The shifts in grammatical function of rhetorical questions as declarations and imperatives as conditionals are also highly problematic in many cultures. If rhetorical questions are used, then they must be immediately answered by the speaker or writer. Otherwise, the rhetorical question appears to be an insult to the audience (asking them something which seems all too obvious) or stupidity on the part of a speaker or writer who should have known the answer without having to ask the question.

In many languages poetry is highly prized because it validates the truth and importance of any theme, but in some language-cultures poetic forms immediately suggest a content which is imaginary and trivial. In fact, one translator of the Bible in popular English refused to employ a poetic format even though some of the translated passages were in measured units. His reason for not using a poetic format was simply to avoid the impression that these passages were unimportant or purely imaginary.

Although it is true that specific types of rhetorical devices often have quite different functions in different languages, the major distinctions in discourse between language-cultures lie in the number and types of devices which are employed in different kinds of discourse. For example, in Classical Greek almost every sentence in prose begins with an initial or postpositional conjunction. In fact, one of Isocrates' books begins with such a particle. Such conjunctions probably served a double purpose: first, to link sentences together, and second, to mark the beginning of a new sentence. This function of conjunctions would have been orthographically very useful since in manuscripts words were not separated by spaces and punctuation marks were not used.

The effective use of various rhetorical devices requires careful attention to principles governing the number, variety, frequency, and distribution of such features in various types of discourse. A serious lack of such features gives the impression of a flat, lifeless style, while too many such features result in so-called "purple prose." Maximal effectiveness depends largely on the right balance, but clearly the number and types of features depend on the

type of discourse. Anacoloutha are expected in modern poetry, but not in essays, while figurative language is indispensable to poetry but almost entirely out of place in commercial contracts.

## Principles Governing the Organization of Discourses and the Use of Rhetorical Devices

In order to maximize the impact and appeal of a text, it is essential to bear in mind certain fundamental principles governing the organization of discourses and the use of rhetorical devices. Impact is accomplished primarily through relevance and novelty, while appeal involves design, progression, cohesion, and congruence.

The principle of relevance relates to the importance or value of the content for the recipients of a message and is primarily a matter of (1) the physical or psychological proximity of the audience to the content or (2) the extent to which such information will satisfy basic human drives and aspirations.

The principle of novelty is based on information theory and is directly proportionate to the "unexpectedness" of the content or the form of the message. The more predictable the information or the more typical the way in which it is organized the less impact it has. An article in the 1990 summer number of *The American Scholar* about people's strange reactions to and use of money could have legitimately had the title of "People's Varied Attitudes about Money," but who would have read it? However, with the title "Money is Funny," who could resist dipping in for at least a few paragraphs?

Appeal is as important as impact, because people must not only be struck by the significance of a text but must find in it something which draws them to it. The design of a discourse involves primarily two fundamental features: wholeness and the relation of the parts to one another. Wholeness consists of completeness and unity. The subject matter needs to be treated fully, and at the same time the end needs to be tied in some manner to the beginning. The relations of the parts need to reflect both proportion (e.g. balance) and symmetry.

Progression is essentially a matter of (1) tempo: the rapidity with which the content of a text seems to be encoded and hence needs to be decoded in order to obtain the desired effect of urgen-

cy or rapid sequence of events, and (2) *rhythm*: the alternating peaks and troughs of loudness, content-versus-function words, and inherent semantic challenges in understanding the text. Not only are tempo and rhythm the most accurate diagnostic features in determining the authenticity of a text, but they are also the most subtle and crucial features of truly effective writing and speaking.

Cohesion is a matter of relating the parts of a text to one another and is accomplished principally by means of connectives which serve as transitions between parts of a text, reference links (pointing back or ahead), markers of foregrounding and backgrounding, and planting of information which is essential for understanding or acceptance of later portions of a text (a standard element in detective stories). Cohesion serves primarily to maximize transitional probabilities in the sense of providing a text which "flows."

Congruence involves both internal and external "fit." Internal fit applies to the manner in which a text faithfully represents the real or imagined world of the discourse in terms of such features as level of language for the different interlocutors, reasonable spatial relations, rational consequences, and valid temporal settings and orders. The external fit involves the extent to which the contents and form of a discourse are appropriate for and acceptable to the audience which will read or hear it. External fit is also related to the setting of the communication: where, when, and how it will be transmitted.

The above principles, which are all stated in terms of "positive values," may be violated for special purposes. Some Postmodern Poets do this systematically in order to explore semantic and formal relations which are generally overlooked in more traditional poetry. Kafka also violated the principle of congruence in his famous book *The Castle*, in which the congruence of individual episodes is startlingly realistic, but the transitions between episodes are absurdly illogical — the stuff of which dreams are made. But that was exactly Kafka's purpose, since he wished to say that life is both absurd and meaningless, even though at times it is intensely real.

The rules for discourse structuring are highly variable, and except for the relatively rigid formulas for typical sonnets, there is considerable latitude. Like the game of football, there are certain things which are simply not done, but within such rules there is always room for special tactics. There are, however, some texts

which reflect so closely special historical settings and particular cultural traits that they largely defy attempts to put them into another language. That is to say, they are largely untranslatable because of their cultural peculiarities. A typical example of this is Ogden Nash's humorous epitaph proposed for Will Rogers, one of America's most famous earthy humorists:

Uncalled-for Epitaph
W.R.
I worked with gun and grin and lariat
To entertain the proletariat,
And with my Oklahomely wit
I brightened up the earth a bit.
I'd brighten Heaven with my capers —
But shucks, the Lord don't read the papers.

For persons well acquainted with Will Rogers' newspaper squibs and his lecture style, this is a delightful tribute. But for those who do not recognize the subtle ambiguity in *uncalled-for* and the even more subtle shift from an expected *Oklahomey* to *Oklahomely*, as well as the tri-syllabic rhyme in the first two lines (almost a signature of Ogden Nash), the characteristic and intentional *don't* of the last line, and the severe litotes in *proletariat* (no journalist in America ever had a wider audience), this poem may be largely devoid of meaning. It can of course, be translated into another language, together with sufficient notes to make it at least somewhat comprehensible, but by that time it would have completely lost its humorous tone and spirit, and any translation which has lost that much has lost too much.

## Illustrative Texts

In order to appreciate some of the implications of these sections on the structure of discourses and the rhetorical devices or processes which may be employed, it may be useful to examine four typical texts from very different types of discourse: (1) the first paragraph of an article entitled "Kreteks Are Big Business" (*Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 1985), (2) the first paragraph of Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Fall of the House of Usher," (3) "Pity Me Not" by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and (4) "Grass" by Carl Sandburg.

Kreteks Are Big Business

The kretek is the incense of Indonesia. It is the fragrant haze that chokes visitors as soon as they step off a plane. It is the gray cloud that seems to resonate from the gongs of Javanese gamelan orchestras. It is the strong, aromatic smoke that fills the lungs of cabinet minister and taxi driver alike. It is the spicy fog that blurs the edges of Indonesia.

This brief paragraph contains a number of significant rhetorical devices and illustrates several basic discourse structures. The extensive parallelism is more obvious if some of the lines are printed in such a way as to highlight the similarities:

It is the fragrant haze that chokes visitors
It is the gray cloud that seems to resonate
It is the strong, aromatic smoke that fills the lungs
It is the spicy fog that blurs

There is just enough difference in the parallel statements to keep them from being "too obvious." Part of the impact comes from the novelty of talking about *kreteks* without identifying what is involved, and an added touch of the exotic comes from the use of *gamelan*, which must have something to do with music, but the term *gongs* provides a partial hint, in that a *gamelan orchestra* uses only percussion instruments.

Note also the use of terms from two different, but relatable, semantic domains (a matter of addition): (1) *incense*, *haze*, *cloud*, *smoke*, *fog* and (2) *fragrant*, *aromatic*, *spicy*. Part of the unity of this paragraph is marked by the occurrence of *Indonesia* at the end of the first and last sentences, and rank, as well as space, are important features of the sequence of what *chokes visitors* to what *blurs the edges of Indonesia*. Having stimulated keen interest in what kreteks must be in order to have such an effect, the author can continue to describe these cigarettes made with pungent tobacco and ground up bits of cloves.

The Fall of the House of Usher

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppres-

sively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was — but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me — upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain — upon the bleak walls — upon the vacant eye-like windows — upon a few rank sedges — and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees — with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium — the bitter lapse into every-day life — the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart — an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it — I paused to think — what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It is possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down — but with a shudder even more thrilling than before — upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

This paragraph is a remarkable example of creating physical and psychological atmosphere through the use of words with special associative meanings, e.g. *dull*, *dark*, *soundless*, *oppressively low*, *alone*, *dreary*, *shades*, *melancholy*, *insufferable*, *gloom*, *unrelieved*, *sternest*, *desolate*, *terrible*, *bleak*, *vacant*, *eye-like windows*, *rank sedges*, *decayed*, *depression*, *after-dream*, *bitter*, *hideous*, *iciness*, *sinking*, *sickening*, *dreariness*, *goading*, *torture*, *unnerved*, *mystery*, *shadowy*, *unsatisfactory*, *annihilate*, *sorrowful*, *precipitous*, *brink*, *black*, *lurid*, *shudder*, *gray*, *ghastly*.

The text begins by noting the oppressive features of the landscape, and then shifts in the second and third sentences to the influence of these features on the writer's depressed state. The focus then shifts back to the physical features again, and as a result of these external features the issue of *an unredeemed dreariness of thought* returns. Finally, the attention shifts again to *gray sedge*, *the ghastly tree-stems*, and *the vacant and eye-like windows*. This adroit shifting back and forth between the external and internal worlds is an excellent example of the interweaving of foregrounding and backgrounding.

The capacity to use so many different expressions with the same or closely similar associative meanings is particularly impressive. In fact, only the expression *vacant eye-like windows* is repeated, although there are some similar phrases, e.g. *rank sedges* and *gray sedge*, and *white trunks of decayed trees* and *ghastly tree-stems*, which serve to tie the middle of the paragraph to the end.

Reproducing the physical and psychological atmosphere of this passage in translation is not at all easy, but if one fails to do this, the whole point of a translation is lost. Translators can be forgiven lexical and syntactic inaccuracies, but failure to recreate the sense of foreboding and fear is unforgivable in this type of discourse.

There are several other rhetorical devices which contribute to the appeal of this paragraph, e.g. alliteration (*dull / dark*, *sinking / sickening*), heightened degrees (*singularly dreary*, *oppressively low*, *unredeemed dreariness*, *insufferable gloom*, *sorrowful impression*), terms with strong associative meanings of impact (*torture*, *goading*, *grapple*, *shudder*), and a remarkable variety of words for mental and emotive activity (*know*, *feeling*, *sense*, *sentiment*, *spirit*, *soul*, *after-dream*, *mind*, *compare*, *thought*, *imagination*, *fancies*, *reflect*, *ponder*, *analysis*, *impression*,

*idea*, *thrilling*).

The analysis and evaluation of this type of text does not depend upon listing different features or even in showing the ways in which they relate to each other. The whole is always greater than the parts, especially in any creative verbal expression. It is the combined, overall patterning, the rhythmic sequences, the unusual, but semantically reinforcing meanings, and the pervasive psychological atmosphere which transforms strings of phrases into an appealing whole.

Pity Me Not
Pity me not because the light of day,
At close of day no longer walks the sky;
Pity me not for beauties passed away,
From field and thicket as the year goes by;
Pity me not the waning of the moon,
Nor that the ebbing tide goes out to sea,
Nor that a man's desire is hushed so soon,
And you no longer look with love on me.

This have I known always: love is no more,
Than the wide blossom which the wind assails,
Than the great tide that treads the shifting shore,
Strewing fresh wreckage gathered in the gales.
Pity me that the heart is slow to learn,
What the swift mind beholds at every turn.

In general the sonnet form is the most rigorously restrictive of all forms of lyric poetry. Edua St. Vincent Millay was justly famous for the manner in which she adhered to the sonnet form while avoiding the artificiality which often characterizes the attempts of less creative poets. The thesis and response in the eight-line and six-line portions of the poem are standard, with the thematic climax in the last two lines. The rhyming sequences are also part of the sonnet format, and so is the basic iambic pattern.

What makes this poem so outstanding are (1) the effective trochaic foot for each occurrence of *Pity* and for the first five words of the first line of the six-line response, by which a radical shift in meaning is signaled, (2) the declining activities (e.g. *no longer walks*, *passed away*, *goes by*, *waning*, *ebbing*, *hushed*, *no longer look*) in the eight-line thesis, in contrast with the intense

violence (e.g. *assails*, *great tide*, *strewing*, *wreckage*, *gales*) indicated in the six-line response, and (3) the radical grammatical shift from third person to *you* ... *me* in the last line of the eight-line thesis. There are also certain minor rhetorical features: (1) the parallel repetition of *Pity me not*, with the bold contrast of *Pity me* in the thirteenth line, (2) the sibilant sounds in *hushed so soon* (almost suggesting something reduced to a mere whisper), (3) alliteration, e.g. *shifting shore* and *gathered* ... *gales*, and (4) the crucial chiastic contrast between *the heart is slow* and *the swift mind*.

But these and other formal and semantic features cannot add up to the total impact and appeal of this sonnet. One cannot equate a description of the parts with the significance of the whole, any more than one can equate the grandeur of an El Greco with a detailed description of the elongated forms, the arresting contrasts in the different shades of gray, the details of brush strokes, and the dark somber background. Truly great poems and pictures are organic wholes, and their "meaning" can only be stated in terms of what Suzanne Langer called "presentational truth," which must be grasped as a patterned whole (a gestalt) and can never be reduced to mere verbal analyses. As such, presentational truth is distinct from "discursive truth," which can be described or converted into words.

Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work —
    I am the grass I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
    What place is this?
    Where are we now?

    I am grass.
    Let me work.

Sandburg was impatient with the many traditional views of poetry, including its emphasis upon strict meter, rhyme, classical

allusions, and sentimental figures of speech. He preferred to capture a moment of disturbing truth in bold uses of language, in which the rules of poetry were bent to serve the meaning of life. Accordingly, the altered rhythm of the seventh line can signal the shift in perspective and prepare the way for the naive, but deeply searching, questions which follow. Sandburg was far more interested in the striking figurative meaning of the whole rather than in any cluster of clever figurative phrases. As a result, his poems typically have several layers of meaning and illustrate effectively the implications of Peirce's three levels or types of meaning. The first level of meaning is found in the literal meaning of the fact that grass does hide the many scars of war, but on a second level it also means that the processes of nature gradually efface any and all results of human activities, whether ghastly or benign — the inevitability of entropy. And finally, even the memory of life's bitter tragedies is lost as the world hurtles toward other catastrophes.

Perhaps the quality of any discourse can be measured best by the number and universality of its higher levels of meaning. Isn't this why great literature is ageless?

## Chapter 7

# Language and Culture

Snice culture is difined succinctly as "the totality of beliefs and practices of a society," nothing is of greater strategic importance than the language through which its beliefs are expressed and transmitted and by which most interaction of its members takes place.

The relation between language and culture would not constitute such serious difficulties for cross-cultural understanding if it were not for the numerous misconceptions about language and its function within a society. Perhaps the most serious misconception is the idea that each language more or less controls the way people think, sometimes expressed as "We think the way we think because we talk the way we talk." It is true that the particular structures of a language (sounds, lexemes, syntax, and discourse patterns) may reflect to a certain degree the way people think and they may be said to form "the ruts or paths for thinking," but they do not determine what or how people must think. Languages are too open-ended and human imagination is too creative to ever be rigidly ruled by the regulations of syntax or of any other feature of language.

Some theologians and philosophers used to speak about the intuitive and particularizing mentality of the "Hebrew mind" as portrayed in the Old Testament, and they contrasted this with the logical and generalizing mentality of the Greeks of classical times as revealed in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. But the revived Hebrew language of today is certainly no impediment to scientific thinking on the part of Israelis, and Greek was no obstacle to the inductive reasoning of the pre-Socratic philosophers nor did it later prevent Neoplatonists from using Greek to promote their philosophical "flights of fantasy."

As already noted in Chapter 1, some people have thought that each language is so distinct that there is no valid way in which the discourses of one language can be translated into another. But at least ninety percent of the fundamental structures of all languages are quite similar, and language universals far outweigh the divergencies. All languages employ figurative expressions, have poet-

ry, use language in singing, and have a great number of literary forms or genres — from genealogies to prayers. One language-culture may emphasize the development and use of particular genres, e.g. epic poetry or animal folktales, which another language-culture may seldom employ and may even strongly reject. But the people of any language-culture have sufficient imagination and experience to understand how the people of another language-culture may rightly differ in their behavior and values, since the behavioral differences within a single culture are usually greater than those which exist between cultures.

The idea that some languages are far superior to other languages and that accordingly some cultures are far superior to other cultures is also a noted deterrent to understanding the relation between language and culture. When people speak about language superiority, they are usually talking about the literature which has been produced in such a language, or they evaluate the lexical and syntactic structures in terms of the ways these have been exploited by creative writers. The oral and written literatures of different languages can differ considerably in quality, but this is not the result of the formal structures of the language in question but of the ways in which the people of the society have invested creative talent in using the language as a medium for the production of valuable literary works. All languages have the potential for outstanding aesthetic expression. It is simply one of the "accidents" of history which determines the emergence of literary genius.

Some people, however, believe that some languages are fundamentally ugly, while others are intrinsically beautiful. In fact, most people insist that their own language belongs to the class of beautiful languages, even though it may have glottalized implosives, clicks that seem to pop and sputter, bilabial trills, and harsh guttural sounds. Phonological beauty is obviously in the ears of the hearer. Arabic, for example, is often cited as an acoustically unpleasant language in view of its various guttural consonants, but a number of Arab poets have succeeded in producing exquisite poems with rich sound patterns as acoustically sensuous and pleasing as occur in any language.

A language does reflect in certain aspects the culture of a society, but primarily in its optional features, i.e. in certain of its hierarchies of vocabulary and in the priorities given to various discourse patterns. It does not, however, reflect the culture in its phonology or syntax, which are largely fixed and arbitrary and

must be such in order to function more or less automatically. Speakers are often conscious of the processes involved in the choice of words, and they are frequently well aware of the manner in which they organize a discourse, but they are almost totally unaware of the phonological system or the syntactic patterns which they employ.

The hierarchies of vocabulary, that is, the ways in which terms representing classes of entities, activities, and characteristics are built up into taxonomies (both popular and scientific), reflect in large measure the manner in which people understand and classify the world in which they live. Some form of the "Twenty Questions Game" can be played in all languages, since people tend to divide up experience into classes or domains represented by sets of contrastive names, e.g. *animate / inanimate*, *animal / vegetable / mineral*, *vertebrates / invertebrates*, *mammals / birds / fish / amphibians*, *canines / felines / bovines*, *shepherds / pointers / hounds / boxers*.

The formal features of lexemes are usually not as important as the taxonomic systems to which the lexemes belong. For example, the phrases *morning star* or *evening star* do not represent "stars" but a planet (usually Venus), but in English we continue to use the terms although most people are fully aware that the phrases are anomalies. Similarly, we speak of the sun as *rising* or *setting*, while in reality it is the earth which is moving. But there are cases in which a false classification has persisted for centuries with serious damage to proper understanding of a phenomenon. For example, the ancient Greeks placed *pur* "fire" in the class of substances rather than in the class of events, and this evidently encouraged a number of false ideas in alchemy about turning lead into gold by adding fire.

The fact that a language may have a proportionately high number of terms in particular domains is an important index to the focus of a culture. For example, most languages of Western Europe have an exceptionally high percentage of technical terms, the Anuaks of the Sudan have hundreds of terms for different kinds and features of cattle, and the Quechuas of the Altiplano of Peru have scores of words for different kinds and forms of potatoes. The knowledge of certain terms is often an index to competence in a particular field of endeavor, and the disappearance of terms from the vocabulary of a large segment of a society may indicate a significant change in the concerns of a culture. For exam-

ple, it is increasingly difficult to find persons in the United States who are familiar with such terms as *double-tree*, *hands high*, *to single-foot*, *jack*, *jenny*, *to gooseneck*, *withers*, *fetlock* and *fresno*.

Changes in culture often give rise to new types of discourse, e.g. technical prose, financial reports, and news resumés. Telegraphic style is giving way to the fuller statements employed in faxing, and commercial codes for cabling instructions to overseas agents are being dropped in favor of telephonic transfer of computer messages by means of modems.

The popularity of certain types of discourse may also reflect cultural concerns. For example, lyric poetry is far more popular in Latin America than in the United States. And in general, epic poetry seems to have suffered a severe loss of popularity except in certain isolated regions, e.g. among the Nilotics of the Sudan and the speakers of some of the Dravidian languages of southern India.

All of these interesting indices of the relation between language and culture are primarily matters of how language is used and are not matters of language structure. Since all languages are open systems, they have the potentiality for growth, change, and decline. In the hands of literary geniuses they can be the medium for brilliant aesthetic expression, and they can be seriously misused by persons who have little or no sensitivity for clarity or elegance.

## Bilingualism and Biculturalism

Bilingual competence has almost always been regarded as an essential requirement for translators, but this does not always mean that one must have an active competence in both the source and target languages. Some unusually adept and successful translators have only had a passive (reader's) competence in a source language. This is obviously true for those who have translated the Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit classics, but it also applies to many translators of both technical and literary texts in modern languages. Translators with very limited competence in the source language are, however, at a great disadvantage and must often compensate for this lack by obtaining the help of someone who may be weak in the target language but who is fully competent in the source language.

For truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function. Dictionaries and encyclopedias are an important source of strategic cultural information, but they can never take the place of personal involvement in a foreign society. This is one of the reasons why most programs for the training of translators and interpreters require that students spend at least six months to a year in each of the countries where the student's acquired languages are spoken. Only by being in the countries in which a foreign language is spoken can one acquire the necessary sensitivity to the many special meanings of words and phrases. For example, in some parts of Latin America the Spanish word *huahua* means "baby", and in others a "bus." In one part of Cuba *papaya* is the name of a tropical fruit, but in another it is a reference to the female genital organs.

Differences of culture may also be a reason for having marginal notes in a translated text. In many parts of Africa the closest equivalent to English *mother* is often a general term representing a number of persons, in fact, all the women in the same age-grade who were initiated at the same time. The use of the English word *mother* to refer to all such persons almost always requires a marginal note. Similarly, a Thai text of the four Gospels of the New Testament without an introduction was seriously misunderstood as being a series of four reincarnations, not as four different accounts of the life of Jesus.

People become so accustomed to their own ways of doing things that they cannot conceive of other people accomplishing the same purposes by quite different actions. Many people knock on doors to make their presence known, but in some parts of the world people may call the names of the occupants or they may cough or clap their hands. Such differences are rarely presented in a systematic way in books on anthropology or in volumes describing a culture, because they often seem too trivial or obvious.

## Language and Subcultures

Societies are increasingly becoming heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. In fact, even in the tribal parts of Africa it is difficult to find a more or less homogeneous society in which all the members have the same values and engage in essentially the same types of activities. In almost all villages some persons have gone to

work in the cities or the mines and have come back with certain ideas and habits that are quite different from those of other members of the society. This tendency toward heterogeneous values and habits is increasing rapidly in sprawling industrial societies in which differences of education, work, and patterns of association are creating sociolinguistic dialects. These vertical dialects (in contrast with earlier horizontal or geographical dialects) pose real problems for translators.

In some instances a text may be in a substandard dialect in the source language, and the translator faces the difficulty of finding an appropriate equivalent in the target language. One of the most brilliant translators to adapt a translation to the geographical and social status of characters in literature is B. B. Rogers, translator of the plays of Aristophanes in the Loeb Series. His treatment of the Megarian farmer's speech in *The Acharnians* is a remarkable case of dialectal equivalence. Rogers has adapted a rural dialect in Scotland to reflect the manner in which the people of the island of Megara spoke Greek in a dialect quite different from Attic. But in *The Thesmophoriazusae* the Scythian speaks English like a recent immigrant from Eastern Europe.

Social dialects carry much more information than we might supect. An American teenager living in England for several years spoke both American and British English, but she used British English in talking to her British girlfriends because she wished to reflect the solidarity she felt toward them and her desire to be accepted by them. In talking with her British boyfriends, however, she used American English since it heightened her boyfriend's status to have an American girlfriend.

In the United States the status of Black English is an important political and social issue. Most educated Blacks are diglossic in the sense that they speak two forms of English: Black English and Standard English, with tremendous cultural pressures to be able to use Standard English for its economic and social advantages. Black English, however, is still very important for social solidarity within the Black community.

Since a number of Blacks have difficulty in reading documents in Standard English, some people have encouraged the idea of publishing materials in Black English for those who show strong cultural preferences for Black English. But this idea has been strongly denounced by members of the Black community since it is interpreted as a form of paternalism in view of the implied sugges-

tion that Blacks are incompetent in Standard English.

Some source-language texts contain mixed social dialects. For example, the core of Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* is in Standard English, but the conversations are largely in a form of substandard English of a particular social class. Reflecting this type of shift, which extends throughout the novel, is extremely difficult, but without this type of distinction so much of the realism and pathos is lost.

The problems of social dialects, however, are not restricted to substandard forms of language. Elaborately evolved literary dialects can be just as restrictive in their potential audiences and can carry associative meanings of elitism and snobbishness. In many languages there has been a tendency from time to time for literary canons of correctness to become more and more elaborate and in this way to depart farther and farther from oral usage. Finally, the literary dialect fails to communicate meaningfully, and suddenly there is a literary revolution in which the literary standards approximate much more closely the standards of oral usage.

Some of the difficulties of translation stem from culturally idiosyncratic meanings. A text which only reflects the many concepts and literary canons of a particular isolated culture often includes information which is extremely difficult to understand and to translate in a distinct language-culture. Willingness to drink poison in order to prove one's innocence may seem preposterous to Americans, and deciding whether to go on a long journey on the basis of how a chicken flops about after its head has been cut off can also seem incredible. But for many Africans it is equally absurd for people to fast when food is available. Since food has been provided by God, refusing to eat it means insulting God. Also, people who spend money to buy pills in order to sleep are regarded by most Africans as being completely out of their minds.

Because of the serious problems posed by social dialects, there is a need for so-called "spatial shifts" in intralingual and interlingual translating. Even within a single language it may be necessary to communicate information to people of a quite different sociolinguistic dialect. Companies engaged in marketing high technology often have rewrite specialists whose task it is to "translate" documents into a simpler form of language so that it will be understood by nonspecialists. Conversely, some international agencies have persons whose work is to upgrade documents prepared in a substandard form of language, documents written by persons who

are not fully competent in a so-called "international language."

The principles which are applicable to these shifts in social dialects are also relevant to interlingual translating. For example, some of the New Testament is written in a form of Hellenistic Greek which is below the standard of rhetorically acceptable Greek of that period. In general, theologians have consistently upgraded the level of language in their translations and have often used euphemisms to avoid expressions which might seem inappropriate, e. g. *bowels*, *kidneys*, *sexual organs*. In the same way, translators of the Greek classics have often used euphemistic expressions in translating ribald phrases and have occasionally translated the Greek into Latin if the text seems to be too sexually explicit. Sapir even followed this same procedure in translating some Southern Paiute texts.

## Chapter 8

# Functional Equivalence

The adequacy of translations has traditionally been judged on the basis of the correspondence in lexicon and grammar between the source and target languages. The correspondence has frequently been stated in terms of "equivalence," even though the term *equivalence* is often not used. There is, however, a serious problem involved in discussing the adequacy of a translated text primarily in terms of lexical and grammatical features, or even in terms of discourse structures. Translating means communicating, and this process depends on what is received by persons hearing or reading a translation. Judging the validity of a translation cannot stop with a comparison of corresponding lexical meanings, grammatical classes, and rhetorical devices. What is important is the extent to which receptors correctly understand and appreciate the translated text. Accordingly, it is essential that functional equivalence be stated primarily in terms of a comparison of the way in which the original receptors understood and appreciated the text and the way in which receptors of the translated text understand and appreciate the translated text.

There are a number of fundamental problems involved in studying translation adequacy in terms of "readers' responses." . In the first place, it is often very difficult to determine how the original readers comprehended the text, and in the second place, it is frequently impossible to evaluate effectively the responses of those who read a translated text. One of the reasons for this latter difficulty is that many people have certain presuppositions about what a translated text should be like. They not only expect a literal, awkward text, but they often believe that if a translation is not linguistically peculiar, then it is not a faithful translation of an original. Some people have assumed that a valid judgment about a translation could be obtained by asking people to rate a translation on a seven point scale in terms of such features as *accurate / inaccurate*, *good style / poor style*, *idiomatic / flat*, and *easy / hard*, but the bases for judgment would differ so radically from one person to the next that nothing really worthwhile would be derived from such a process.

The adequacy of a translation depends on a great many different factors: the reliability of the text itself, the discourse type (from lyric poetry to grocery lists), the intended audience, the manner in which the translated text is to be used (e.g. read in the quiet of one's study or acted on the stage), and the purpose for which the translation has been made, e.g. to inform, to change behavior, to amuse, or to sell a product. These same factors apply not only to the translated text, but also to the original, a fact which only complicates any evaluation of a translation.

In general it is best to speak of "functional equivalence" in terms of a range of adequacy, since no translation is ever completely equivalent. A number of different translations can in fact represent varying degrees of equivalence. This means that "equivalence" cannot be understood in its mathematical meaning of identity, but only in terms of proximity, i.e. on the basis of degrees of closeness to functional identity.

Such a view of functional equivalence implies different degrees of adequacy from minimal to maximal effectiveness on the basis of both cognitive and experiential factors. A minimal, realistic definition of functional equivalence could be stated as "The readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it." Anything less than this degree of equivalence should be unacceptable.

A maximal, ideal definition could be stated as "The readers of a translated text should be able to understand and appreciate it in essentially the same manner as the original readers did." The maximal definition implies a high degree of language-culture correspondence between the source and target languages and an unusually effective translation so as to produce in receptors the capacity for a response very close to what the original readers experienced. This maximal level of equivalence is rarely, if ever, achieved, except for texts having little or no aesthetic value and involving only routine information.

There is always some loss and distortion in verbal communication since no two interlocutors ever have exactly the same designative and associative meanings for the same phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discourse features. Their grids for comprehension and evaluation are always somewhat different, but their experience in the use of language and their capacity for foreign-language empathy make it possible for them to communicate effec-

tively. There are no neat formulas for measuring functional equivalence in either monolingual or bilingual contexts, since the number of factors involved are too many and there is no way in which the different parameters of verbal communication can be given mathematical values. Despite the lack of precision in communication, there is, however, a useful way to think and talk about functional equivalence, namely, by means of isomorphs.

## Isomorphs

Isomorphs, as discussed so effectively by Hofstadter in his insightful volume entitled *Goedel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (1980), provide one of the most helpful ways to recognize and to discuss matters of equivalence. Isomorphs are only an extension of the semiotic concept of iconicity, matters of likeness. But in order to appreciate some of the important features of isomorphs, it may be useful to speak first about some nonlinguistic isomorphs.

A statue is an almost perfect example of an isomorph, since it is supposed to be a close three-dimensional representation of some entity. A picture is also an isomorph, although there is always some degree of parallax when three-dimensional objects are portrayed on a two-dimensional surface. This is also true of architects' drawings and of maps. Certain sets of graphic symbols may also be described as isomorphic, despite the fact that they are not formally alike. They may, however, fulfill precisely the same functions in the respective notational systems, e.g. 1, 2, 3, I, II, III, α, β, γ, 一, 二, 三, the first three numerical signs in four different systems: Arabic, Roman, Greek, and Chinese. Similarly, series such as 2-4-8 and 16-32-64 may be said to be isomorphic since each successive number is the double of the preceding one. In fact, all mathematical formulas are isomorphic representations of what they refer to, and all scientific models are likewise isomorphic, even though they may be the result of considerable reductionism.

The most obvious language isomorphs are the onomatopoeic words such as *hiss*, *squawk*, *cluck*, and *screech*. The use of first, second, and third person reference to represent the three primary participants in communication is likewise isomorphic with the respective communicative roles, and in Latin even the customary order of the pronouns in texts was likewise first, second, and third.

The order in narrative sequence is generally isomorphic with the order of events, and the order of old and new information in most sentences represents the order of discourse awareness. The taxonomies of lexemes involving orders, families, genera, species, and races likewise reflect biological factors.

A particularly significant role for isomorphic relations is found in the formal difference and functional equivalence of allophones. For example, as already noted in Chapter 3 the series *till*, *still*, *pit*, and *litter* contains phonetically quite different forms of the phoneme *t*, but the roles of these related sounds in English are so functionally equivalent that most people are completely unaware of the differences. The varieties of the ways in which such letters as *E* and *G* are written also illustrate the role of functional isomorphs.

The processes in oral communication represent in a very effective manner the role of isomorphs in preserving information despite great differences in the physical forms of the verbal symbols. For example, when a person speaks the vibrations of the vocal cords (mechanical movements) are modified by the voice apparatus and come out as waves of air which are transmitted to the eardrums of hearers. The waves become mechanical and pass by means of the bones of the ear to the fluid of the inner ear. The acoustic waves then vibrate the cilia of the inner ear at different points, and these vibrations become electro-chemical impulses which travel by means of nerves to the brain. Despite the significant differences in the media of transmission, the essential features of these waves — their frequencies, shapes, and amplitudes — are preserved, and except for such modifications as may be caused by external noise or physiological deficiencies, these waves are information-preserving. Once, however, they arrive at the brain, they must be compared with existing auditory templates and related to the language-culture grid of the hearer. At this point one cannot depend upon the strictly isomorphic acoustic impluses, but must rely on the closest functional equivalents based on the experience of the hearer.

We may define functional isomorphs on the basis of the means for accomplishing essentially the same results within different systems. This means that for the English idiom *to hit the ceiling* Spanish may employ *tomar el cielo en las manos*, literally, "to take the sky in the hands." Similarly, for the English expression *to grow like mushrooms* it is appropriate in Chinese to talk about

"growing like bamboo shoots."

There may be such radical differences in philosophical systems that formally similar statements may have quite different functions. Some postmodern poetry with its focus on violence, meaninglessness, and vulgarity constitutes a very different cultural grid from the Victorian concept that "God's in his heaven and all's right with the world." Similarly, some scientific models are so different that formally similar statements have quite different meanings. Compare, for example, the focus of sociolinguistics on the empirical evidence of language as it is actually used and the idealist approach to language in the transformational-generative theory which depends on an ideal speaker-hearer, redical reductionism, an autonomous syntax, and a tendency to treat many of the awkward problems as simply matters of subcategorization which can be shoved over into the lexicon.

## Isomorphs as Tools for Interpretation

Since the meaning of any linguistic expression depends upon its representation of entities, activities, characteristics, and relations outside of language, the relation of an utterance to its interpretation depends in considerable measure on the degree of isomorphism involved. For example when first hearing the West African proverb *A dry leaf doesn't laugh when its neighbor falls*, a person almost inevitably begins to compare the setting of a dry leaf with that of a person and to note the extent of the isomorphic elements. In some cases, however, a hearer may not have enough knowledge of the setting to be able to note the resemblances and therefore may not be able to comprehend the meaning. For example, in Central Africa there is a widespread proverb which says *A man who hunts elephants never sleeps cold*. Persons who are not accustomed to seeing how elephants break down many trees and shrubs as they feed may not realize that this proverb really means that only people who undertake large and risky tasks can expect to enjoy the many attendant benefits.

The meaning of the chapter on the "Grand Inquisitor" in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* can only be understood by noting the isomorphic similarities and contrasts in the novel, in the history of the Inquisition, and in the biblical accounts of Jesus' life. The first few pages of Claude Simon's novel *Le Vent* ( "The Wind" ) seem to make no sense because the vocab-

ulary, syntax, and punctuation are so chaotic and turbulent, but that is just the point that is being made. The form of the introduction is designed to represent a whirlwind.

Isomorphs with different functions are just as important as those with similar functions. For example, in some languages complete parallelism of form and meaning in poetry is regarded as an insult to the intelligence of hearers and readers. But in some of the languages of Indonesia the lack of parallelism is thought to be a serious mistake. Poetic lines immediately suggest to many people that the utterance is important, but to other people that the content is simply imaginary and hence untrue. In some societies genealogies are important devices for validating the authority and importance of a person, but in other societies they may be regarded as pretentious and artificial. Even numbers differ greatly in their symbolic values. For example, in the Bible the numbers 7, 12, 14, and 40 are highly symbolic, but in Maya the important numbers are 4 (an important element in directions and classifications), 5 (the sequence for market days), 20 (the number which designates a person), 13 (a highly valued religious number), and 52 (the designation of an epoch).

## Functional Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence

The concept of functional adequacy in translating has been described in a number of books and articles as "dynamic equivalence." In *Toward a Science of Translating* (Nida 1964) dynamic equivalence has been treated in terms of the "closest natural equivalent," but the term "dynamic" has been misunderstood by some persons as referring only to something which has impact. Accordingly, many individuals have been led to think that if a translation has considerable impact then it must be a correct example of dynamic equivalence. Because of this misunderstanding and in order to emphasize the concept of function, it has seemed much more satisfactory to use the expression "functional equivalence" in describing the degrees of adequacy of a translation.

The terms "function" and "functional" seem to provide a much sounder basis for talking about translation as a form of communication, since the focus is on what a translation does or performs. A lack of functional equivalence can then be described in terms of a failure to provide isomorphic limits. Compensation for a lack of isomorphism may be introduced as a means of accurately

representing the meaning of the source text. For example, because of the lack of close correspondence in figurative expressions, it may be necessary to translate some figurative expressions in the source language by non-figurative phrases in the target language. If, however, too many such figurative expressions become non-figurative, much of the impact of a passage may be lost, something which is particularly critical in the case of poetry. In order to compensate for such loss, it may be important to translate some non-figurative expressions by means of figures in the target language. In this way some balance with the original text can be obtained.

## Principles for Producing Functional Equivalence

A number of relevant principles govern the kinds and degrees of adjustment which may be necessary in order to produce a satisfactory functional equivalent of a source text. If a more or less literal correspondence is functionally equivalent in both designative and associative meaning, then obviously no adjustments in form are necessary. But if this is not the case, then the following principles may be helpful in deciding what should be done in order to produce the closest natural equivalence:

1. If a close, formal translation is likely to result in a misunderstanding of the designative meaning, (a) certain changes must be introduced into the text of the translation or (b) the literal translation may be retained and a footnote explaining the likely misunderstanding must be added.

In practically all circumstances the first alternative in this principle should be followed, but there are certain circumstances and types of documents, e. g. legal contracts, wills, political statements, and purposely esoteric or cabalistic religious texts, in which a literal rendering with an explanatory note may be warranted.

The types of changes which are justified in the case of possible misunderstanding of designative meaning are primarily lexical, but they may involve matters of syntax as well. Only rarely is it necessary to make radical adjustments in the discourse structure.

2. If a close, formal translation makes no sense, i.e. is totally obscure in designative meaning, certain changes may be introduced into the text unless the source text is purposely obscure, in which case the obscurity may be retained, and a footnote explain-

ing the nature of the obscurity may be very useful and in most instances fully justified.

Obscurity of meaning may have several causes: the intent of the source (this is often the case in political statements and esoteric documents), orthographic corruption (especially common in ancient texts), and inadequate dictionary or encyclopedic information so as to reconstruct the context of the documents in question (also frequently in ancient texts or in those dealing with unusual customs and events). Translators are justified in trying to provide a possible meaning for the text, but any basic obscurity or ambiguity of meaning in the source text should be noted so that readers will not assume meanings which are not justified. It is particularly important to distinguish between (a) a lack of meaning, which is inherent in the text itself, and (b) a lack of understanding on the part of present scholars due to their ignorance of the sociolinguistic context of the source document.

3. If a close, formal translation is so semantically and syntactically difficult that the average person for whom the translation is being made is very likely to give up trying to understand it, certain changes are warranted, although it may be useful to indicate the nature of such changes in an introduction or in footnotes.

The translation of a highly technical article for people who are relatively unfamiliar with the contents, e. g. translating a graduate-level text for high school students, may require simplification of vocabulary or built-in explanations for technical terms. Long, involved sentences may also be broken up into more easily understood units.

In some instances the reason for a close, formal translation being difficult for readers is the intricate nature of the discourse structure or the fact that the original text presupposes considerably more knowledge about the contents than can be expected of the readers of the translation. This may require a type of "rewrite" so as to make the text of the translation acceptable to readers. This type of "adaptation" in translating should be much more common than it is, especially in the case of third-world countries which are trying to catch up with the rapid expansion of technological information.

4. If a close, formal translation is likely to result in serious misunderstanding of the associative meanings of the source text or in a significant loss in a proper appreciation for the stylistic values of the source text, it is important to make such adjustments as are

necessary to reflect the associative values of the source text.

Translators of literary texts have generally been aware of the need to represent properly the associative meanings of the source text, but it is also true that some readers want a strictly literal translation so that they can know something about the formal features of the original text. Other readers may insist on literal translations because they mistakenly think that such a translation is automatically more "faithful" and that literalness prevents undue interpretation on the part of the translator. In fact, some people imagine that it is possible to translate a text without interpreting its meaning.

The extent of adjustments in order to match the stylistic or rhetorical values of the source text depends largely upon the kind of discourse which is involved. The fully adequate translation of a lyric poem normally requires almost a "new poem" on the same theme, especially if the source and target cultures are distinct. In fact, the translation of a poem into something which is not a poem is not a functionally equivalent translation. Even a translation of a letter which falsifies the emotive intent of the source cannot be regarded as a legitimate translation.

Too many translators assume that a correct reflection of designative meaning is all that is required in translating. In fact, however, the associative meanings are generally far more important in convincing readers of the relevance of the content.

5. The manner in which a translation is to be used has a significant influence upon the extent to which adjustments are to be made.

The translation of a drama to be read in the quiet of one's home is generally quite different from one which is designed to be acted on the stage. The former type of translation can afford to have relatively close, formal correspondences, since significant differences or problems in understanding can be explained in footnotes. But there is no time or place for footnotes in a stage performance. Similarly, the translation of a document to be broadcast on radio needs to represent carefully the distinctions between written and oral discourse. There is nothing quite so boring as having to listen to a discourse prepared in written style.

6. The fact that a source text must be translated in such a way as to occur with accompanying codes usually requires a number of adjustments on all levels: phonology, lexicon, syntax, and discourse.

The translation of songs almost always means considerable formal adjustments, e.g. the accented syllables must occur on the right notes; in the case of sustained notes or a series of notes on the same syllable the quality of the vowels must be "singable" (no singer can warble well on the vowel of *but*); the number of syllables normally needs to be the same as the number of notes, and a translator must avoid transitions with heavy consonantal sequences, e.g. the sequence *mpststr* in *glimpsed streams*.

The translation of operas involves even more serious difficulties, since the words must fit the music and also the action. The greatest number of adjustments in translating (and the greatest rewards for success in doing so) occur in preparing texts involving lip synchronization for the cinema and television performances. Not only must the length of utterances be adjusted, but the sounds of the translated text must correspond with the facial movements of the picture track, especially insofar as lip movements are concerned.

These principles for the production of functionally equivalent translations have a number of very practical implications:

1. The greater the differences in the source and target cultures, the greater the need for adjustments.

2. The greater the differences between the source and target languages, the greater the need for adjustments. In general, however, the differences in culture give rise to more important adjustments than the differences in language. This means, for example, that two languages belonging to two distinct language families, but sharing essentially the same culture (e.g. German and Hungarian), will require fewer adjustments than in the case of two languages which are within the same language family but which have quite distinct cultures (e.g. English and Hindi).

3. The more distinctive (whether idiosyncratic or elevated) the style of the source text, the greater the number of adjustments.

4. The greater the differences in social and educational levels of the source and target audiences, the greater the number of adjustments.

5. The more a translated text is dependent on an accompanying code, the greater the number and variety of adjustments.

The principles of adjustment and their practical implications are not matters of plus-minus categories for easy pigeonholing of examples of formal and semantic adjustments. In each case a

translator is faced with a continuum and where on such a continuum the adjustment is justified depends upon a host of factors. Some translation theorists attempt to set up formulas designed to specify precisely what should be done in each type of situation, but there are too many different types of situations, too many different genres, too many different kinds of audiences, and too many purposes for translating and communicating. What is needed are not elaborate formulas or theories, but translators with unusual sensitivity to the resources of language, the importance of culture, and the art of translating.

*Chapter 9*

# Translation Procedures

Translation procedures involve far more than step-by-step procedures for producing a translation from a source text. There are a number of preliminary factors which must first be considered, e.g. the nature of the source text, the competence of a translator, the direction of the translation (e.g. from an acquired language to one's own mother tongue or from a text in one's own mother tongue to an acquired language), the type of audience for which the translation is being prepared, the kind of publisher and editor, the marketing of the translation, and how it is likely to be used by readers.

The actual translation process also involves a number of quite distinct factors, e.g. the pressures of time, work by a single translator or by a team, ideal vs. realistic procedures, testing the results, multiple translations of the same text, and the learning of translation techniques.

## The Source Text

The variety of source texts is as wide as the types of discourse: from lyric poetry to shipping notices and from international treaties to advertising slogans. In view of the immense inventory of discourses which are constantly being translated, it is no wonder that there is no single theory of translation which neatly summarizes the various genres and stipulates in a series of succinct principles what can and should be done in each and every case. If there is no one theory of language to explain the forms and function of language, one cannot expect to encounter a single theory of translation. Not only must translating cover the entire range of subject matter, but it is required to do so in an equally wide range of styles: easy/difficult, serious/lighthearted, fresh/dull, colorful/drab, exciting/boring. These stylistic differences are the basis for much of the text's associative meanings, which are often far more important than the designative meanings.

Discussions of a translator's problems with a source text are normally stated in terms of the type of literary genre. In reality,

however, there are certain fundamental features which are even more significant. The differences between generic and specific vocabulary provide a whole range of problems. Most translators prefer a text with generic vocabulary, since highly specific vocabulary often requires a translator to use a dictionary or encyclopedia more frequently. But in general the range of designative meanings of specific vocabulary is much more likely to be similar between languages, while the semantic ranges of generic vocabulary very frequently do not readily correspond. For example, some Bible translators think that translating the book of Revelation is extremely difficult because of the highly specific vocabulary in the various visions. Conversely, they think that translating the Gospel of John is very easy because of the generic vocabulary. In reality, however, quite the opposite is the case. It is relatively easy to translate the book of Revelation, despite the fact that the interpretation of the visions is difficult, while an adequate translation of the generic terminology of the Gospel of John is extremely difficult, since the range of meanings of the vocabulary differs so much between English and Greek, e. g. *grace*, *truth*, *witness*, *love*, *light*, *darkness*, *fullness*, *glory*, *spirit*, *believe*, *clean*, *way*, *life*, *peace*, *sanctify*, *world*.

A semantically condensed text. e.g. one in which most activities are expressed by nominalized verbs without explicit mention of agents, instruments, and experiencers, seems at first glance to be quite easy, but it is often very difficult to render such noun expressions accurately and meaningfully. In fact, this is precisely the type of text which requires "unpacking" by making explicit what is structurally implicit in the source text. For example, the expression *the retreat of cultural relativism from the need for interpretation* certainly requires a good deal of "filling in" if it is to make sense in languages which do not customarily employ this type of nominal string put together by means of prepositions. In some languages the closest natural equivalent is "Those who believe that what the people of any culture believe and do is equally as good as that of any other culture generally refuse to evaluate what such people believe and do."

Source texts also differ greatly in the excellence of the style. Generally, an excellent style also means greater problems for the translator in doing justice to the associative meanings. On the other hand, a plain, dull style is not as easy as one might assume, especially if the publishers want significant improvements in the

style of the translation. A text which is stylistically attractive can be more challenging and personally rewarding to the translator, but doing justice to such a style can also be quite frustrating.

Far more serious problems are involved in the distinction between a straightforward presentation of content and one in which there are multiple or shifted meanings. Lyric poetry, advertising copy, and religious texts are notorious for their multiple meanings, and whether these same multiple meanings can be expressed effectively in another language-culture is problematical. Almost equally difficult are texts in which there is a radical semantic shift in the meaning, e. g. humor, irony, and sarcasm. In some instances a translator must mark the meaning of a statement by adding a verbal cue, e.g. "as he said in jest," "he said ironically," and "with sarcasm in his voice." Such expressions, however, dilute appreciably the impact of the source text.

A source text may be so culturally specific as to almost defy translating. This is one reason why folk tales of so-called "primitive societies" are seldom appreciated except by ethnographers and anthropologists. In terms of local standards for narrative discourse they may be excellently told or written, but their cultural specificity makes them not only difficult to translate but also extremely hard to understand.

When the content of a text is highly technical, a translator is likewise faced with serious problems of understanding it and of adequately rendering it into a target language. The understanding of such a text often requires considerable specialized knowledge, and the problems of translating may be made even more difficult if the translation is being prepared for a target audience who are not themselves specialists in the field.

## The Competence of a Translator

It is always assumed that translators are at least bilingual, but this is really not enough. To be a fully competent translator, one also needs to be bicultural in order to "read between the lines." A translator must be able to sense what is purposely left implicit in the source text and what can and should be made implicit in the translated text. In fact, too many translations are needlessly long, since translators believe that they must explicitly represent every word or innuendo in the text.

A second or third language is something which can be

learned, although in the process of mastering a language it is usually necessary to murder it from time to time. But biculturalism is something which must be absorbed and experienced in a living situation. There are, however, some competent translators who have never had the privilege of living in the country in which the source or target language is spoken, and accordingly, they have had to depend upon voluminous reading, but such persons are certainly the exception. Those translators who specialize in documents from ancient languages have a double liability in that the number and types of such documents are often quite limited and there is no opportunity to consult an informant.

In addition to an excellent command of both source and target languages translators usually specialize in one or more areas of knowledge in which their competence is needed and the pay is better, e.g. aeronautics, chemistry, artificial intelligence, mechanics, accounting, international law, medicine, or agronomy. But some more common fields may also require considerable specialization of knowledge, e.g. manuals for television repairs, exotic cooking recipes, and building codes.

In general it is possible to classify the various grades of specialization in knowledge in terms of the assumed educational levels: (1) that which one can assume most high school graduates should know, e.g. business letters and bills of lading, (2) that which most university graduates should know, and (3) that which specialists in a particular field have learned. But formal education is not always an adequate gauge of knowledge, especially in a time in which there is a worldwide decline in educational standards.

Bilingualism, biculturalism, and adequate knowledge of the content of a text are insufficient without the ability to write effectively. To some extent the skills required in writing can be taught, but persons need to have special aptitudes for clear and pleasing verbal expression. If translators intend to specialize in such literary genres as lyric poetry, novels, drama, and popular essays, they should have personal competence in these types of discourse.

Competence in writing can be described as consisting of three levels: (1) ability to write good letters, effective news articles, and personal accounts, (2) capacity to write technical essays or articles in some field of specialization, and (3) creative capacity for producing attractive prose and poetry. There may, however, be a danger with some highly creative persons who are not satisfied to identify with the thoughts of other authors, but insist on imposing

their own ideas on those of the original source.

Perhaps the greatest liability for translators is that they undertake to translate long before they have the necessary skills in language, knowledge of the content, and capacity for writing. As a result, they often develop habits which cannot be easily altered since they seem to be so "natural" as the result of having been practiced for such a long time.

Any careful and extensive examination of a wide range of translations being produced in various parts of the world suggests that fully half of these translations are considerably below the level of what they should be. Even in the area of literary works too many publishers are content to publish inferior translations, either because they do not understand what good translations should be like or because obtaining the services of fully competent translators would prove too expensive and perhaps too timeconsuming.

## The Direction of the Translation Process

The direction of the translation process is a significant factor in the procedures employed in translating and in evaluating the adequacy of the resulting text. Translating into one's own mother tongue is almost always preferable, since a translator is usually far more competent in the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical features of his or her own language than in an acquired language. There are situations in which a person may be almost equally competent in two different languages, but this can be somewhat of a liability, since a person may be so familiar with both languages as to not always know just what is idiomatic in the one language but not in the other. The difficulties are compounded if the two languages are quite similar, e. g. Spanish and Portuguese. In fact, some people argue that no one can speak both of these languages well because of the numerous "false friends," words which seem to be identical in form and meaning but which involve subtle differences, especially in associative meaning.

Whether the translation is made from or into one's own mother tongue, the primary consideration in translating is a thorough understanding of the meaning and function of the sourcelanguage text. In fact, more errors in translation are made because of failure to comprehend the source text than for any other reason. Accordingly, it is almost incredible how little time some translators give to the detailed study of the text to be translated. Even routine

source texts need to be looked at carefully before launching into the process of translating.

As the inherent difficulties of texts increase, the importance of being able to translate into one's own mother tongue becomes more and more crucial. This is especially true of translating poetry and songs. One teacher of translating in one of the prestigious universities in the Orient wrote a dissertation on the possibility and adequacy of literal translations of Chinese classics into English, and the results of the recommended procedures were illustrated by some fifty different translations of Chinese poems into English. But only one of these translations is acceptable as a poem in English.

The translation of Chinese songs into English provides an even more difficult challenge, and very few Chinese speakers have been able to succeed in producing acceptable equivalents. One teacher of Chinese and English tried numerous times to produce acceptable translations which could be sung in English, but he was never able to understand and appreciate the need for the accented syllables to coincide with the dominant notes of various musical tempos, even in 4/4 and 3/4 time. Because the Chinese language has a very different rhythmic system, the translator was not able to grasp the necessary adjustments which must be made in translating songs.

## The Target Audience

The target audience for which a translation is made almost always constitutes a major factor in determining the translation procedures and the level of language to be employed. The fact that the audience for a translation is captive, i.e. students who are required to buy, read, and understand a text, may explain why in many instances translations of textbooks are so inferior. Government bureaucracies in the field of education are too often more political than academic, and when finally a decision to translate and publish a particular text has been made, the contents may very well be out of date — especially if the text deals with areas of science in which research is advancing rapidly.

Science textbooks are sometimes poorly translated because publishers believe that only specialists will be reading such texts and that such persons will readily be able to understand, despite hastily done translations with numerous unnatural expressions. In

fact, readers of translated textbooks are so accustomed to poor translations that they assume that awkwardness is more or less par for the course. What a translator can get by with often determines the level of stylistic sensitivity of a translated text.

In those situations in which the intended audience is not captive, but free to choose and buy what is not only intelligible but appreciated because of its stylistic features, the need for more adequate translating is obvious. This is particularly acute in circumstances in which the intended audience is generally of a lower educational level than the audience of the original text. In such cases a translator must not only do a better job in reflecting the stylistic potentials of the target language but must make adjustments for the differences in educational levels. This usually means simplification of vocabulary and grammar, as well as certain important shifts in dealing with rhetorical features. Such a translation should not, however, be limited to any arbitrary list of most common words, since such a translation can actually be more difficult and semantically misleading.

Some of the best translators make it a practice to imagine that a typical member of the intended audience is listening on the other side of the desk as the translation is being dictated or is reading the text as it flashes on the computer screen. In this way the text of the translation is being prepared for a listening or reading person and is not merely a process of trying to match words and syntax. With this approach it is possible for a translator to be more consciously aware of the fact that "translating means translating meaning."

## Publishers and Editors

Many translators are unaware of the role of publishers and editors in the process of translating. In fact, they sometimes spend months on a translation of a recent book without checking as to publishing rights for translations of the book in question or without determining whether the same book is being translated by someone else. If a freelance translator is interested in translating a particular book, he or she should certainly contact a publisher known to be interested in this type of publication. A sample translation of a single chapter can provide a publisher or editor a basis for judging the competence of the translator. In most instances, however, publishers are acquainted with a number of translators,

and they generally know the types of competence and experience which such translators have. Accordingly, they normally ask translators to undertake a particular task.

In addition to making preliminary arrangements for the translation of a particular text, it is important to know the type of audience which the publisher wishes to reach, the editorial principles and practices of the publishing house, and the ultimate format, since this may influence appreciably the treatment of major embedded sections and quotations, as well as footnoting, indices, and a possible introduction by the translator.

Through a publisher it is often possible to contact the author of a book and in this way be more certain about the interpretation of some obscure or ambiguous expressions. Some translators have been anxious to submit their translations to the authors, but this is relevant only when the authors know the target language quite well and are sympathetic with the principles employed in functional equivalent translating. Some authors are so enamored with their own choice of words and stylistic devices that they wrongly imagine that the specific way in which they have expressed their thoughts must be taken over literally into another language. In fact, some creative authors are incredibly inept translators.

## The Use of a Text

The particular ways in which a text is to be used will also influence the manner in which it is to be translated. A text prepared for personal reading may often be made more meaningful by in troducing footnotes concerning features of the original text which cannot be reproduced in the translation. But such notes are useless for texts of dramas to be acted on the stage. Liturgical texts designed to be read aloud to an audience or to be read in unison or in antiphonal lines or verses must reflect the rhythmic units of the target language and must be understandable when heard. This means that ambiguities cannot be resolved by punctuation, since many oral readers pay little or no attention to such signs.

Promotional texts designed to sell people things or ideas — the essence of advertising copy — aim at relating designative and associative meanings in the closest possible way, since "selling" usually depends far more on associative meanings than on designative ones. Most people buy with their emotions, not with their minds. Associative meanings are closely linked to cultural values

and beliefs, and as a result it is extremely difficult to produce a formally close translation which will be effective. Accordingly, most promotional texts require radical adaptations. This can be seen readily in travel magazines published by international airlines. Rather than simply translate a German article into English, the basic contents of the German article are often restated in a manner which would be more interesting to an English — Speaking audience. In fact, in many instances publishers would be much better advised to have a text radically adapted rather than translated, if they are really interested in promoting the ideas of the source text. In this way the culturally relevant features in the adapted text can be more effectively highlighted and largely irrelevant matters can be dropped or simply summarized. Multilingual communication is in need of "rewrites" as well as "translations," but rewrites require much more skill and creative ability.

## Procedures in Translating

In an ideal situation, but one which seldom exists, the procedures in translating involve (1) background preparation and (2) the actual processes, but a distinction needs to be made as to whether the translation is to be done by a single person or by a team.

Ideal circumstances should mean sufficient time and adequate resources (books and consultations) to read and study the entire text to be translated and to make notes as to any and all problems. These difficulties of interpretation or rendering can then be resolved before undertaking the actual task of translating. If other translations of the same text already exist, these can be carefully consulted so as to determine how various problems have been handled. In some instances, this preliminary study of the text and its potential difficulties may actually require more time than the translation process, especially if the translator is obliged to read widely in other publications by the same author or in books and articles produced by other persons on the same subjects and within the same period of time:

The actual procedures in translating can be summarized as follows:

1. A relatively fast translation with emphasis on style. Some translators find that dictating a translation results in fresher and smoother renderings. But whether a person dictates, types, or

writes in longhand, what is important is the rhythmic flow of the resulting text.

2. The preliminary text should be set aside for a week or so, in order that it can be treated as something new and can be more objectively evaluated without the echoes of earlier renderings still ringing in one's ears.

3. A careful review of the text for content, with special emphasis on accuracy and consistency of rendering. Unnecessary additions can be eliminated and earlier oversights can be introduced. Special attention can be given to the consistent rendering of key concepts, and any awkward expressions can be altered.

4. The revised text should again be set aside for a few days.

5. The text should then be reviewed for style; in fact, it may be necessary to do this several times. One very important technique is to read the text aloud, since ears are much more sensitive to matters of cohesion and rhythm than eyes are.

6. The text must again be reviewed for orthographic details of spelling, punctuation, and format. Some translators mistakenly believe that they can combine reviews of content, style, and orthography, but this is a serious mistake. Each of these aspects of the text should be reviewed separately.

7. Submission to the editor and / or publisher, and in some instances only after testing the translation with persons who are presumably representative of the audience for which the translation has been prepared.

8. Incorporation of suggestions from the editor or publisher, although some of these suggestions may require further consultation and discussion. A translator should not permit his or her own integrity to be overridden by uninformed opinion, especially if the name of the translator is to be associated with the publication. For the most part, however, editors of responsible publishing houses are likely to have very helpful comments to make, and these should be carefully considered.

These eight steps in translation procedure represent an ideal set of circumstances, but in most instances there is strong pressure to complete a translation as rapidly as possible. A highly competent translator can often combine a number of steps, but the principle of aiming first at a stylistically acceptable text which can then be reviewed for accuracy, consistency, and orthographic correctness is fundamental to effective translating. An awkward literal translation can only rarely be restructured to make it stylist-

ically acceptable, but a stylistically pleasing text can be easily "tightened up" to make it more accurate.

The translation of a text by a team of translators is generally a quite different process and involves very different procedures, depending upon whether the team works in a translation bureau in close collaboration with colleagues or whether the members of the team produce initial drafts separately and then meet from time to time for a discussion of a "consensus" draft.

In a translation bureau there are normally plenty of published helps ( dictionaries and encyclopedias ), an adequate lexical database, and several persons with knowledge of the same target language and of special kinds of content. Furthermore, most bureaus are organized in such a way as to have a leader for each team of translators, and any special problems can be referred directly to such an experienced individual. In such circumstances one person normally takes responsibility for a basic draft which can then be reviewed by one or more other translators.

Many professional freelance translators have almost the equivalent of a translation bureau in that they have access to specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias, to a lexical database provided by a publisher or a translation center, and to a translations consultant provided by the publisher or the translation bureau which has commissioned the translation.

When, however, the task of translating a major work has been assigned to a team of translators who generally (1) divide responsibility for various parts of a text, (2) read and react to the drafts of their colleagues, and (3) meet from time to time to discuss differences of opinion in an effort to arrive at a consensus, the procedures are frequently quite different and complex. In the first place, it is difficult to form a team of equally competent persons who respect the experience and qualifications of all their colleagues. In many cases weaker members of such a team compensate for their inadequacies by trying to dominate discussions. In the second place, a team must arrive at more or less detailed principles for the translation so that differences of opinion can be discussed in terms of such principles and not as personal criticisms of colleagues. In the third place, it is important to have someone who can act as a kind of outside "umpire" when the team is seriously divided. Otherwise, personality conflicts can seriously impair the progress of the work. In the fourth place, it may be very useful to hire competent reviewers to carefully go over the text in

terms of both accuracy of content and acceptability of style.

## Basic Processes in Translating

The four basic processes in translating consist of (1) analysis of the source text, (2) transfer from source to target language, (3) restructuring in the target language, and (4) testing of the translated text with persons who represent the intended audience.

The analysis of the source text means a detailed treatment of both the designative and associative meanings of the lexemes, the syntax, and the discourse structures. As already indicated at various points in this volume, understanding and appreciation of the source text are fundamental to any attempts at translating. In fact, it is failure at this point which is responsible for most deficiencies in translating. If a translator really understands the meaning of the source text and has adequate competence in the target language, translating appears to be a completely natural and an almost automatic process. The reason why so much space in this volume has been given to the nature of language and to the lexical, syntactic, and discourse features is because so many translators are unaware of what to look for in the source text.

The process of transfer involves the shift from thinking in the source language to thinking in the target language. Here is precisely where the essential process of translating takes place — the content has been "carried across." The level of explicitness at which this transfer takes place is normally as great as possible and has been detailed in terms of so-called "kernel" structures in Nida and Taber (1969).

The process of restructuring involves the organization of the lexical, syntactic, and discourse features of the transferred text so as to provide maximal comprehension and appreciation on the part of the intended audience. For a fully competent translator all this takes place almost automatically. In fact, it is almost as automatic as speaking in one's own mother tongue.

Although these three basic processes can be abstracted, it is entirely wrong to think that translators accomplish their task in three stages or steps. All three of these processes are going on at the same time and are largely below the level of consciousness. Good translators do not have to think about how to change active expressions to passive ones, how to change a nominalized verb into a dependent clause, and whether to shift from a noun to a pro-

noun in referring to a person. Translators who must constantly worry about just how to restructure a text in the target language are probably undertaking to translate without having acquired the necessary competence in the target language.

Although the testing of a translation is somewhat different from the processes of analysis, transfer, and restructuring, it is an essential element in that it exposes so quickly any problems which exist in a translation. In the past most testing of a translation has been undertaken by assigning a bilingual person to compare the source and target texts and to determine the degree of correspondence. The problem with this approach is that the bilingual judge is probably already so familiar with the text and the type of contents that he can understand the text without too much trouble. An adequate evaluation of a translation can only be accomplished by testing the reactions of monolingual persons who are representative of the constituency for whom the translation has been made.

The most helpful diagnostic tests are the following: (1) oral reading by different persons, (2) close analysis of facial gestures of readers, (3) hearing a text and telling the contents to people who have not heard the text read, and (4) the cloze technique.

One of the most useful tests is to have a text read by several different competent persons while the translator follows a written text and marks down all instances of hesitation, mispronunciation, substitution of wrong words, repetitions, and intonational uncertainty. If two or more relatively competent readers have difficulty at the same points in a text, there are obvious problems at such places. The difficulties in reading may be due to a number of problems, e. g. high-level vocabulary, awkward syntax, lack of transitionals, heavy consonant clusters in juxtaposed words, and an absence of markers indicating questions, commands, sarcasm, irony, and extended ellipses. This test will not tell a translator how to correct the text, but it will point to those places in the text which need to be corrected.

As different readers read a text aloud, it is useful to watch carefully the facial gestures and especially the eyes of these persons, since they reveal so much about the understanding and the appreciation for the content and form of the text. It does not take a careful and sympathetic observer long to recognize whether the reader understands the text, is interested in its contents, and finds it pleasurable, or whether the reader fails to comprehend what the

text is talking about, becomes bored with the reading, and discovers that the text is really too difficult to be read with ease.

As a test for content it is useful to have a person read the text aloud or silently and then have that person tell others what the text is all about. It is astonishing how many people can read something without really comprehending the contents, but if two or more persons make the same mistake in comprehension, then clearly the translation needs changing, unless, of course, the source text is itself intentionally ambiguous or obscure.

The cloze technique can also be a useful way to determine degrees of readability. This technique involves omitting every fifth word and asking people to introduce the proper word to fit the context. The extent to which people can fill in the right expressions in a minimum of fifty blanks is a very useful indicator of the extent of transitional probabilities and accordingly a measurement of the text's readability and intelligibility. It is also possible to apply a modification of this cloze technique by omitting every tenth word in reading a text aloud and then counting the number of mistakes a person or group makes before suggesting the right term.

Even better than all the tests of a translation involving representatives of the intended audience is the informed judgment of a skilled translator / editor who understands the fundamental principles of interlingual communication and is an artist with words, for example, a person like A. Leslie Willson, who for so many years has edited *Dimension* and has provided such significant help to those interested in translating some of the most recent highlights in German literature. A careful study of a number of issues of *Dimension* can provide a remarkable introduction to what it means to capture in a target-language both the content and the form of the source text.

## The Relative Length of Source and Target Texts

The rate of flow of information in the texts of different languages appears to be more or less the same, that is, to consist of approximately fifty percent redundancy as a means of overcoming physical and psychological "noise." This means that if a person hears about one half of the sounds of an oral text, it is usually possible to fill in the part which is not heard. One of the important maxims of communication is that a person does not say more than is necessary to communicate his or her intent, and since members

of the same speech community share a great deal of background information, it is often possible to communicate much information in very succinct ways.

A major problem with interlingual communication is that in so many cases there are big gaps and differences in the amount and kind of shared information. What can remain unsaid in a source-language text must often be made explicit in a target-language text, and as a result the translation seems to be conspicuously longer than the source. The significant measurement of the difference is not, however, a matter of the number of words or of the length of lines. Some differences in length may depend on matters of word formation or orthography. For example, an English translation of a German or Spanish text is often somewhat shorter in total length, not because of cultural differences but primarily because in both German and Spanish there are a number of word endings which are obligatory, while in English this is not the case. Conversely, an English translation of a Chinese text is often considerably longer, not necessarily as the result of cultural differences but because the orthographic symbols for Chinese words occupy proportionately so little space. Any completely satisfactory measurement of the differences in total length must depend upon the number of semantic features, both designative and associative. The types of distinctions resulting from this kind of calculation would provide the only realistic definition of the extent to which two languages would differ in the manner in which they compact information. In other words, "longer" or "shorter" must be calculated in terms of total information conveyed, and not on the particular manner in which the orthography, phonology, word formation, or syntax represents the lexemes and their relations.

## The Teaching of Translation Techniques

Some people have questioned whether translating can or should be taught, since some of the best translators have never had instruction in translating. In fact, many excellent translators feel that courses in translating are a waste of time, since shifting from one language to another by competent bilinguals is such a natural thing to do. Furthermore, since translating is to some degree a skill, it can be best learned by doing rather than by studying the theories or principles which may or may not be applicable to

actual performance. Moreover, people learn new skills in many different ways because of their different aptitudes and motivations, so that setting up courses in translating appears to be a clumsy device for teaching what should be as natural as learning to walk or to talk.

Despite such objections to teaching translating, there has been a recognized need for instruction and guidance in learning to translate and interpret effectively. In Europe there are a number of universities and institutes which provide very helpful programs for persons wishing to be professional translators, and in China almost every university has courses in translating, since competence in translating is regarded as one of the five basic language skills: hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. The International Federation of Translators, sponsored by UNESCO, publishes *Babel*, a journal designed to help translators become more proficient and to provide them the means of contact with translators in other parts of the world.

Courses in translating range from one to three years, and usually include background studies in sociolinguistics, communication theory, literary criticism, resources (data bases, dictionaries, encyclopedias), and editing. But primary attention is given to translating graded texts, first from a foreign language into one's own mother tongue and then from one's own language into a foreign language. In most instances, students, are encouraged to control at least two foreign languages and to have a relatively high degree of competence in some significant area of international concern, e.g, ecology, commerce, geography, public health, aviation, and meteorology, or in one of the sciences of special international importance, e.g. biology, chemistry, physics, and medicine.

In addition to graded texts most programs introduce a rather wide variety of texts (both in terms of content and form), emphasize informed criticism of students' efforts, study different translatons of the same source texts made by professional translators, and analyze those features of quality translations which make them exceptionally outstanding. But usually students learn more from constructive criticism of their own efforts than they do from background theory or lists of principles.

Most programs combine theory and practice, while others focus almost entirely upon practice and expect students to acquire from practical experience whatever principles are relevant. Both types of programs have produced competent translators and are

crucial for meeting the drastically increasing requirements for persons able to bridge the language gaps throughout the world. Nevertheless, many professional translators have never attended such courses, and some of the most competent translators insist that outstanding ability depends far more on unusual aptitude than on any organized system for mass producing translators. In other words, translators are born, not manufactured.

Unfortunately, many courses in translating have to spend too much time improving students' control of foreign languages. This is particularly true in some of the Third World countries where university courses in foreign languages concentrate so much on grammar that students have not acquired sufficient competence to translate adequately.

Too many courses in translating still suffer from the heavy tradition of literalism as the standard of "correctness" and "faithfulness." Too few students are introduced to the necessity of creative equivalence, and too few editors and publishers understand the importance of adaptation and summaries. The pressures of time are such that most documents would serve a much wider audience and would probably be much more meaningful if they could be effectively summarized rather than translated. There is also need for greater sociolinguistic sensitivity in the treatment of material which is repugnant to a particular culture. For example, in their articles about language structures some linguists use illustrative sentences with scatological terms and political diatribe which are totally unnecessary and in fact detract from the relevance of the examples.

*Chapter 10*

# Theories of Translation

As yet there is no theory of translation in the technical sense of "a coherent set of general propositions used as principles to explain a class of phenomena," but there are quite a few "theories" in the broad sense of "a set of principles which are helpful in understanding the nature of translating or in establishing criteria for evaluating a translated text." In general, however, these principles are stated in terms of how to produce an acceptable translation.

The lack of a fully acceptable theory of translation should not come as a surprise, since translating is essentially a very complex phenomenon, and insights concerning this interlingual activity are derived from a number of different disciplines, e.g. linguistics, psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, communication theory, literary criticism, aesthetics, and semiotics. The fact that there is no generally accepted theory for any one of these behavioral disciplines should be a sufficient reason for people to realize that there is nothing basically inadequate about translating simply because those who translate cannot explain by means of a comprehensive theory precisely why they do what they do.

The various sets of principles or rules about how to translate can be helpfully discussed in terms of historical developments, which Snell - Hornby (1988) has done very effectively, or they may be discussed in terms of certain disciplines which have provided the basic insights to explain various aspects of translation and interpreting. The formulation of translation theories, however, involves primarily the Western world, although in China people have discussed extensively their traditional three principles of and ideal translation, namely, faithfulness, smoothness, and elegance, but without ever coming to any conclusion about the relative importance of the principles. During the Middle Ages a great deal of translation took place in the Arab world from Bagdad to Toledo, but the principles which were employed have had no significant impact on present - day practice in the world community of translators.

There are, however, certain difficulties involved in trying to

discuss translation theories on a strictly historical basis. In many instances the differences about principles of translation only reflect changing fashions about literature, and in some cases heated arguments about how to translate seem to reflect little more than personal prejudices and literary rivalries. Too often the differences depend on extreme positions, e.g. the contention by Ortegay Gasset (1937) and Croce (1955) that translation is really impossible. Mounin (1963) has shown how marginal such discussions are, and Güttinger (1963) has remarked about how inconsistent such authors have been in agreeing to have their writings translated.

Since the Bible has been translated for a longer period of time and into more languages than any other book, it is not strange that some of the conflicts about principles of translation have focused on how one can legitimately translate a book which is regarded as divinely inspired. The answer to this type of problem in the Arab world was to decide that the Koran should not be translated, and as a result most translations of the Koran have been done by non – Muslims. In Christendom, however, translating flourished in the first few centuries and again during the Reformation, but arguments about literal or free translations reflected theological presuppositions more than linguistic concerns.

Jerome was in great trouble for having insisted on rendering the Bible into ordinary language (the Biblia Vulgata), and Luther had to defend his views of translating in a document which had a major influence on freeing the vernacular languages of Europe from the heavy hand of ecclesiastical Latin. Campbell (1789) defined and illustrated a number of basic principles of translation in an introduction to his own translation of the Four Gospels, and these principles were apparently expropriated by Tytler (1790) in a volume which is still cited as having made a major contribution to the theory of translating. Despite several important recent contributions to the principles of translation by those concerned with Bible translating, the actual practice of Bible translating has frequently been far less innovative and creative than, for example, many of the translations of the Greek and Latin Classics in the Loeb series.

A more useful approach to a study of the diversity of translation theories is to group together variously related theories on the basis of the disciplines which have served as the basic points of reference for some of the primary insights: philology (although in

present-day usage spoken of as "literary criticism" or "literary analysis" ), linguistics, and semiotics. The order reflects a somewhat historical development, but each of these approaches to translating is strongly endorsed and favored by a number of present-day scholars. At the same time it is important to recognize some of the important contributions which certain other related disciplines have made to principles of translation.

There are, however, two fundamental problems in almost all of these approaches to translating: (1) the tendency for advocates of a particular theory to build their theory on a specific discipline and often on its applicability to a single literary genre or discourse type and (2) the primary or exclusive concern for designative rather than associative meaning. This is particularly true of those theories of translation which depend on some form of propositional logic to provide the categories for establishing "equivalence."

## Theories Based on Philological Insights

Philology, the study of written texts, including their authenticity, form, meaning, and influence, has been the primary basis for discussions of translation theories and practice for some two thousand years. In general the texts have been literary productions, since these have been the only texts considered worthy of careful translating. Concern for why and how to translate arose among Romans who were interested in rendering the Greek Classics into Latin. But the issues discussed by such persons as Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, Catullus, and the younger Pliny focused primarily on the issues of literal vs. free translating. Was a translator, for example, justified in rendering the sense at the expense of the words and grammar, or should the meaning of a phrase be sacrificed in order to conserve the form of the original text? For the most part leading Roman writers and scholars opted for freedom in translating, but the practice of translating and concern for principles of effective communication largely died out during the Middle Ages.

With the intellectual explosion of the Renaissance *Les Belles Infideles* "the beautiful unfaithful ones" dominated the new trend in translating the Classics into the vernacular languages of Europe. And although Cowley's translation of Pindar's Odes (1656) was by no means as extreme as some of the more "far out" examples of early enthusiasm for freedom in translating, he was never-

theless strongly criticized by Dryden (1680), who proposed a theory of translating based on three major types: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. By metaphrase Dryden meant a literal, word-for-word rendering of a text, and by imitation he meant radical departures, including additions and reinterpretation. Accordingly, paraphrase was designed to represent the logical compromise between the extremes.

In this approach to the problems of translating literary texts Dryden was supported by Pope (1715), but Matthew Arnold (1862) reacted against such freedom and insisted on preserving the form of an original, even though the meaning and the spirit of a text might suffer. In order to illustrate his point of view, he translated the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English hexameters. Since such attempts at literal rendering proved largely unacceptable, some philologists insisted that translation is simply impossible.

Beginning with the twentieth century, philology experienced an infusion of new life through the recognition of insights to be gained from new developments in linguistics, especially from the Russian structuralists, the Prague school, British functionalism, and anthropological linguistics in the United States. The focus of philology shifted from the formal features of particular literary texts to the role of language as a code, a system for communication, and an integral part of culture. This new orientation as it relates directly to translation is well illustrated in the volumes on translation by Brower (1959), Steiner (1975), and Fowler (1977).

Perhaps the most important contribution to philology from linguistics has been in the area of text linguistics, the study of how texts are organized formally and thematically into a number of distinct types, often called "genres," e. g. narratives, conversations, discourses, arguments, jokes, riddles, genealogies, sermons, and lyric poetry. Some of the principal contributions to text linguistics have come from such scholars as Jakobson (1960), Halliday (1970), van Dijk (1975), and de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981).

In the twentieth century philology has also been influenced by a number of French existentialist semioticians, especially Lévi-Strauss (1951), Greimas (1966), Barthes (1966), and Derrida (1981). The result of this contribution to philology has been the acceptance by many persons of the separation of a text from its context, in the sense that every literary text has a life of its own (a kind of autonomous existence) and its interpretation need not

be related to the setting out of which it arose. This approach means that interpretation depends totally upon what the reader of such a text reads into it. This orientation has resulted in some extreme views about translating. Such a radical viewpoint about the interpretation of a text is not, however, endorsed by most semioticians, who insist that a text is always an act of communication and can never be legitimately interpreted apart from the total setting in which it takes place.

## Theories Based on Linguistic Insights

Several scholars have approached the issues of translating primarily from the viewpoint of the linguistic differences between source and target texts. Some of the more important contributions include Vinay and Darbelnet's comparative analysis of French and English as a basis for a method of translating (1958), Catford's volume *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), Toury's book *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (1980), Larson's textbook *Meaning-based Translation* (1984), and Malone's transformational-generative approach *The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation: Some Tools from Linguistics for the Analysis and Practice of Translation* (1988).

As in the case of the philological orientation to translating, linguistic theories have also been influenced and enriched by a number of developments, including cultural anthropology, philosophical approaches to semantics, information and communication theories (with special input from computational linguistics, machine translation, and artificial intelligence), psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics.

A major set of insights for translating have been derived from the study of lexical semantics by linguists involved in cultural anthropology, e. g. Goodenough's work on Trukese semantic categories (1951), Lounsbury's analysis of the Pawnee kinship system (1956), the description of key semantic domains in Hopi by C. F. Voegelin and F. M. Voegelin (1957), and Conklin's work in botanical taxonomies (1962). Many of these insights have been summarized and enlarged by Weinreich (1966) and Lehrer (1974). The cultural dimension in translating forms a major component in the publications by Nida (1964), Nida and Taber (1969), and Snell-Hornby (1988), who entitles one chapter "Translation as a Cross-cultural Event."

Philosophers interested in their distinctive type of "linguistic analysis" have made primary use of various forms of propositional logic to define meanings on the basis of certain distinctive features. Katz and Fodor (1963) attempted to construct a semantic theory based on binary sets of distinctive features in order to treat lexical semantics as essentially a kind of projection of the same model as was developed in transformational-generative grammar for treating syntactic structures. Bolinger (1965), however, showed how impossible this is in view of the fuzzy boundaries of meaning and the overlapping domains.

Snell-Hornby (1988) has effectively described how a number of translation theorists in Germany pushed the idea of equivalence to the point of insisting that semantic differences can and should be rigorously distinguished. In fact, they went so far as to insist that true translating can only apply to nonliterary, i.e. nonfigurative, texts, since they considered the latter strictly marginal uses of language — a position not too different from that of Chomsky. Fortunately, Newmark (1981) has never hesitated to say bluntly what many others have thought, namely, that when a system becomes so arbitrary or restricted as to exclude some of the most creative and meaningful aspects of language, it is essentially useless.

Information theory, as formulated primarily by Wiener (1948, 1954) and Shannon and Weaver (1949), has had a very useful role in helping translators recognize the function of redundancy. Communication theory, which is an enlargement of information theory, has helped translators see the importance of all the many factors which enter into interlingual communication: source, target, transmission, noise (physical and psychological), setting, and feedback (immediate and anticipatory). Research in computational linguistics, as reflected in the journal *Computational Linguistics*, is especially rewarding as it clarifies and systematizes lexical and syntactic properties of languages.

Communication theory has had considerable influence on the work of Kade (1968) and Neubert (1968), and especially on the insightful studies of Reiss (1971 and 1976), whose breadth of approach has been unusual.

Research in machine translating has also helped translators appreciate more fully how strikingly different are the "routine and mechanical" correspondences between languages from those correspondences requiring creative innovation. In Wilss's volume *The Science of Translation: Problems and Methods* (1982), communica-

tion theory and machine translating figure prominently in what is essentially a description of the "state of the art" of translation theory.

The linguistic orientation toward translating has been especially helped by work in the field of sociolinguistics, in which the emphasis is not on language as a structure but on the role of language in its use by speakers. Sociolinguistics has called attention to the function of levels or registers in language, sociolinguistic dialects, the roles of power and solidarity in language usage, and the systematic character of what some linguists in the past have regarded as mere accidental variation. For translators the research efforts of Labov (1966), Hymes (1974), and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are particularly significant.

## Theories Based on Sociosemiotics

Perhaps the most pervasive and crucial contribution to an understanding of translating is to be found in sociosemiotics, the discipline which treats all the systems of signs used by human societies. The great advantage of semiotics over other approaches to interlingual communication is that it deals with all types of signs and codes, and especially with language as the most comprehensive and complex of all the systems of signs which humans employ. No holistic approach to translating can exclude semiotics as a fundamental discipline in encoding and decoding signs.

Semiotics, as the study of how people use and understand signs, is as old as the writings of Plato and Aristotle, but its present-day formulations depend in large measure on the unusual insights of Peirce (1934), the systematization of these in Eco (1979), and the practical implications of these in Sebeok (1976 and 1986).

One distinct advantage of a semiotic approach to meaning is the requirement that equal attention be given to designative and associative meanings, since signs of whatever nature must be understood in terms of the total context of communication and in relation to any and all other signs which combine with verbal symbols. This focus has been especially important in de Beaugrande's treatment of the factors in poetic translating (1978) and in his article on schemas for literary communication (1987). Paul Friedrich has provided especially important insights in his volume entitled *The Language Parallax: Linguistic Relativism and Poetic*

*Indeterminacy* (1986), which illustrates effectively "the indeterminacy of individual speech and of the individual speaker, particularly the poet, as a link between the ascertainable order in language and the intimations of disorder in and beyond language." As an anthropologist, linguist, and poet, Friedrich is in an unusually strategic position to deal creatively with linguistic relativism and poetic indeterminacy, which the professional translator must wrestle with each day. It is the "order-to-chaos continuum" which is the ultimate challenge to communication.

For an increasing number of anthropologists and sociologists, e.g. Geertz, Sperber, and Mary Douglas, knowledge is itself only a semiotic of culture and life is simply a semiotic experience, whether on the level of the DNA and RNA or on the level of awe felt in watching a majestic aurora borealis. But for the translator the problem exists in trying to communicate knowledge and experience by means of symbols which always involve some degree of distortion. The translator's task can then be defined as striving for solutions which will be as functionally isomorphic as possible. As already noted, for this task Hofstadter (1980) has done a great deal to help translators understand the problems of information — preserving and information-altering symbols, even though it is not possible to attach numerical values to the degree to which corresponding words in any two languages differ, whether in designative and / or associative meanings.

As noted in Chapter 2, Wittgenstein suggests (1958) that the use of language is essentially equivalent to a game in which the parties negotiate for personal or collective advantages. This concept of language is particularly relevant for the translator who is engaged in negotiating with the source text in order to determine its meaning, most of which is overt, although much is always covert. A translator must also negotiate with the language of the target audience in order to arrive at the closest natural equivalent. Such negotiating should not be regarded as merely seeking some dull compromise representing the lowest common denominator of agreement. Creative negotiating should aim at something new and fresh and a means of communicative pleasure. In this sense translating is one of the prime examples of the practicality of game theory, which in turn constitutes the most insightful model for realism in interlingual communication.

Game theory constitutes an excellent basis for translating because it is also an excellent theory of language, communication,

and literature. Since language both reveals and hides and always involves some degree of parallax (the distorting effect of noncorrespondence between symbols and referents), speakers and writers must constantly negotiate between desired precision and the indeterminacy of language. To a significant degree language is rule bound, but language is also an open system with plenty of room for creative strategies to get the message across.

Game theory can explain a great deal about the use of language in communication, especially as it relates to the sociological functions of language. The interpersonal function of establishing and maintaining a person's position in the hierarchy of status and roles demands constant negotiating in saying the right thing at the right time to the right persons in order to maximize power and solidarity. In attempting to alter the cognitive and emotive states of other persons, adroit negotiating is crucial, and to influence people's behavior (the imperative function) certainly requires extreme sensitivity to the power of rhetoric. Verbal negotiating is a constant process of maximizing impact and appeal with minimal effort.

Game theory is particularly applicable in literature and especially so in detective stories, in which the author and readers play a constant game in trying to reveal and at the same time to hide the identity of the perpetrator of the crime. In a novel the author reveals just enough to keep the reader's interest until the climax is reached and the crucial decisions and actions take place. In good expository writing an author will always try to anticipate objections from readers and in this way negotiate for a significant advantage. Lively conversation is an excellent example of negotiating for effective presentation and acceptance of a particular set of ideas.

For a translator game theory can be especially useful since it can serve to turn a perfunctory job into a creative challenge for discovering new ways to solve old problems. Instead of looking in dictionaries, grammars, and encyclopedias for answers, translators can examine the source text in order to determine just how the author has negotiated with the language, the culture, and the discourse patterns to communicate the message. Once this process has been understood, translators can employ corresponding techniques to accomplish similar results in the target language.

For persons who feel that most of the discussions about the theories of translation are beside the point, there is still much that

can be learned about the principles of effective interlingual communication by studying what expert translators have done. A few hours of detailed investigation of the following translations and the underlying texts can do a great deal to open new vistas to the nature and practice of translating: the dramas of Aristophanes, translated by B. B. Rogers in the Loeb Classical Library; *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and translated by Gregory Rabassa (Avon Books); *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, translated by William Weaver (Warner Books); *Night Flight* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, translated by Stuart Gilbert; and any one of a series of articles translated from German by A. Leslie Willson and published in *Dimension* (a journal of contemporary German arts and letters and edited by Willson). Translators will also find fascinating insights about translating in the journal *Translation Review*, published by the University of Texas at Dallas. Each issue highlights the experience of some outstanding translator who shares, usually in the form of an interview, his or her philosophy of language and important principles of translation. This hands-on approach to the successes and failures in translating is extremely helpful, since theories are always chasing practice in order to explain what has already been discovered.

## Preface to Part Two

For a number of years I have been increasingly interested in the role of contexts in understanding and translating texts, because failure to consider the contexts of a text is largely responsible for the most serious mistakes in comprehending and reproducing the meaning of a discourse. But contexts need to be understood as influencing all structural levels of a text: phonological, lexical, grammatical, and historical, including events leading up to the production of a text, the ways in which a text has been interpreted in the past, and the evident concerns of those requesting and paying for a translation.

In order to indicate precisely the implications of the roles of contexts I have incorporated translations into English from French, Spanish, and German. And as a way of describing some of the more significant, but less known, treatments of translation, I have summarized several of these in Chapter 6 and have added Chapter 7 in order to present the three major types of theories of translation in terms of philological, sociolinguistic, and sociosemiotic principles.

I also wish to acknowledge the help that I have received from those who have reviewed certain portions of the text or who have provided help in recording questions and discussions about *Contexts in Translation* during a series of presentations of these concepts in ten universities in China during the Spring of 1999: Mona Baker, Gavin Drew, Jiang Li, Johannes P. Louw, Heping Shi, Huang Ren, Tan Zaixi, and Zhang Jinghao.

Chapter 1

# What is Translating?

Is translating simply the act of transferring the meaning of a text from one language into another or does it depend on some theory of similarities and contrasts between languages? In order to analyze and to direct such an activity, a number of specialists in translating have elaborated numerous theories: linguistic, sociolinguistic, communicative, free, literal, hermeneutic, semiotic, relevant, skopos, Marxist, transformational, and even gender — to mention only a few. But what seems even stranger is that for the most part the best professional translators and interpreters have little or no use for the various theories of translation. They regard them as largely a waste of time, especially since most professional translators regularly and consistently violate so many rules laid down by theorists.

One reason for rejecting certain theories of translation is the fact that they are often too heavy in technical terminology and too light on illustrative examples of what top-flight translators actually do. One of the most important journals focusing on the translating of literary texts does not accept articles on theories of translating, while for Chinese translators Yan Fu's triple principle of translation, namely, "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" fails to say what is to be done when these three ideal principles are not equally applicable. But according to Zhang Jing-hao this triple principle of translation advocated by Yan Fu and by many other Chinese theorists was not meant to be a key to translation theory or to translation practice. The three principles of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance should be understood not as competitive but as additive factors: first, faithful equivalence in meaning, second, expressive clarity of form, and third, attractive elegance that makes a text a pleasure to read. But unfortunately too many Chinese translation theorists and practitioners have focused primarily on elegance and quite naturally they concentrated their efforts on literary texts. Much the same development took place in the West, because many people assumed that only literary texts deserved or needed to be translated. As a result, most present-day theories of translation still focus on stylistics rather than on con-

tent.

What is even more discouraging is the fact that most students in programs of translation find that courses on theories of translation are the least helpful, especially when they are heavily front-loaded in a curriculum by those who do not realize that the processes and procedures in translating and interpreting are basically skills, and not compilations of information in content courses, such as literature, history, and philosophy. But this does not mean that a detailed and comprehensive study of what translators and interpreters actually do is irrelevant. In fact, such scientific studies of the semantic and semiotic aspects of interlingual communication are extremely important, as is the study of any and all types of human behavior. But the results of such studies need to be presented in understandable language and carefully integrated into creative practice. A clear understanding of the nature of interlingual communication should become general knowledge because so much of how we think and respond to new developments in science and politics is influenced by what is happening in the process of translating and interpreting. This is especially important for the success of the European Union in which all translations into all the languages have theoretically the same legal standing.

Too often textbooks on translation employ technical vocabulary that most students cannot readily grasp, and the assigned passages for translating are usually so short that students do not have the required contexts with which to make intelligent decisions about correspondences in meaning. Frequently, however, courses in translation actually turn out to be courses in language learning since university programs in foreign languages concentrate much more on literature than on the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In translation programs students learn a great deal about foreign languages, but they usually do not learn how to use such languages in communication. As a result they waste a good deal of time in courses that are poorly organized for both language learning and for translating. In fact, relatively few students entering programs in translating have the necessary language competence to begin translating. This is not the students' fault, but the fault of the educational system.

For professional translators what counts is the effective transfer of the meaning because that is precisely what clients want and need. Their concern is not the formal features but the content of

the text. For example, in documents from Spanish-speaking Latin America coming to the European Union the customary phrase *cooperación económica* is not rendered by Commission translators as "economic cooperation" but as "help" or "assistance," because that is precisely what is involved. Nevertheless, people preparing texts for the European Union continue to use *cooperación económica*, because asking directly for economic help or support would imply that these countries are economically or politically inadequate, which of course they are, or they would not be asking for financial help.

Accuracy of content should not be judged primarily in terms of "being true" to the author, but in not causing misunderstanding of the message by those for whom the translation is intended. As Jumpelt used to say about his principle of translating for the aviation industry, "I want to make sure that no one will misunderstand my translation." What clients need and generally demand is first and foremost accuracy. If a translated text can also be easy to read, this is indeed a plus factor, and if it can be culturally appropriate, the translation is obviously a success.

If completely bilingual persons have a clear understanding of a text to be translated from a source to a receptor (or target) language, they do not need to instruct their brains about how to use a noun, verb, adjective, or participle to represent a particular concept or to place a qualifying clause at the beginning or the end of a sentence, all such decisions are largely automatic because our brains are excellently organized to carry out all such decisions in a largely unconscious manner. The process of going from conceptual clarity to a verbal text is almost automatic and should be regarded as essentially no different from writing in one's own mother tongue. Clarity in understanding the source text is the key to successful translating into a receptor language. Translators do not translate languages but texts.

When, however, a text written in one's own mother tongue must be translated into a foreign language, the focus of attention shifts radically. The translator of such a text should have no difficulty understanding the text, unless it is badly written, but almost inevitably the focus of attention shifts to the linguistic features of the translation, including the proper arrangement of words, sensitivity to the style, and the relevance of the translation for receptors.

Failure to understand clearly a source text often shows up in

the puzzled attempts of readers to make sense of a translation, particularly if the content is related to some new technical discipline, for example, electronics and atomic power. A similar mastery of terminology is required for translating texts involving multinational contracts. Professional translators need not only an excellent general vocabulary but also a mastery of technical terminology in two or three expanding areas of international communication, for example, merchandising, computer technology, and environmental issues.

Some source-language texts inevitably leave their mark on a translation. This is particularly true of legal texts in which there is a tradition of including within a sentence far more than is done in ordinary speech so as to have all the conditioning factors concisely combined. This is also true of many religious texts in which the verbal utterances are often regarded as sacred and divinely inspired, and therefore they must be preserved as sentence units.

Brilliant translators are, however, often surprised by the highly creative solutions that seem to pop into their heads. Such creative translators are the best examples of the fact that interlingual communication is essentially a special skill that does not necessarily depend on long years of training, although it can often be greatly enriched by studying how other translators have solved typical problems. In many respects creative translating is like portrait painting and artistic musical performance.

On one occasion I was chatting with a man seated next to me on a flight up the Atlantic coast of the United States. He was rather embarrassed to admit that he was a portrait painter after having been a successful stock broker on Wall Street for a number of years. I immediately inquired as to where he had studied oil painting, and he admitted that he had never studied art. But when I further inquired about his background, he explained that during a period when his wife was dying of cancer, he had to be with her constantly. But he felt that he had to do something during those long tragic hours. And so he decided to buy some oil paints and paint his wife's picture.

After her death a friend was so impressed by the portrait that he asked to have his own wife's picture painted. And so began a new career in which my friend painted ten or a dozen portraits a year, but he said he was not interested in painting faces but in portraying people. Therefore he would spend a week or two living nearby and getting acquainted with the person to be painted. For

his efforts he received some ten to fifteen thousand dollars for each portrait, but only if people were completely satisfied.

Some outstanding musicians know nothing about the science of harmonics, but they know how to play a piano with incredible skill, and new songs and sonatas seem to pour out of them, as though they had been stored for years in some deep recesses of the mind and were finally escaping.

Our ignorance of the ways in which our minds operate is impressive. Even in the simple activity of speaking we find it almost impossible to believe that a series of purely physical impulses, first, the air waves striking the ear drum, then, the oscillations of the tiny bones of the ear, the physical waves passing through the liquid of the ear and vibrating the cilia — all of which is purely physical — can become electro-chemical in the nerves leading ultimately to the conceptual area of the brain. How these electro-chemical physical features can be transformed into concepts — possibly by means of neural templates composed of complex patterns of synapses — is one of the two great mysteries of life — the other, being the rapidly expanding universe in which we live.

Perhaps even more mysterious is the way in which our concepts are ultimately dependent upon the clusters of sensory impressions or images of sight, taste, feeling, smell, and touch that come to us from outside of our bodies. These combine with certain internal feelings of physical well being and self awareness to make us what we are. Fortunately, we possess ways of symbolizing and understanding our experience by means of verbal sounds, and in this way we can try to make sense of our experiences. A word such as *love* may represent a number of images, and even clusters of images, suggesting such experiences as beautiful appearance, body fragrance, warmth, closeness, sexual attraction, and trust.

As Jakobson (1970, 1972) has pointed out, sociosemiotics, the science of signs in human society, tells us a great deal about the relation of signs to meaning. The iconic signs bear a formal resemblance between the verbal or visual symbol and the meaning, for example, the onomatopoeic words such as *bowwow*, *cockadoodle-doo*, *stutter* and such metaphorical expressions as *my father was a tower of strength* and *history is looking back in order to look a-head*. Imitative magic is also based on similarities, for example, making an image of a person that a voodoo priest wishes to destroy and then burning the image as curses are muttered.

On the other hand, deictic or indexical signs depend on some

type of connection or association, for example, the distinction *here*, *there*, based on a spatial relation to some object. A metonym is often based on a part-whole relation, for example, *All hands on deck*!, a command for all sailors to be at their proper places. Associative magic also involves deictic relations, for example, the use of a lock of hair or even some uneaten food which can be used to cast a fatal spell on a hated victim. Most linguistic signs are, however, conventional, and they need to be if language is to be applicable to the endless sets of entities, activities, states, processes, characteristics, and relations existing in all the relevant aspects of human existence.

An increasing number of disciplines are also concerned with meaning, for example, communication theory, information theory, sociology, semiotics, psychology, philology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, hermeneutics, and aesthetics. Some literary critics, however, regard any published text as "public property" and no longer a part of a particular communication event. Therefore such texts are said to be open to almost any interpretation that any analyst wishes to attribute to it. But semioticians such as Jakobson, Eco, and Sebeok regard any text as a part of a communication process. And accordingly, all translating or interpreting must involve some relevant relation between the text in the source language and the text in the receptor language. At the same time, it should be clear that although this relation is never exact, there should be sufficient similarity that it can be described as having some significant measure of equivalence, described either as "the closest natural equivalent," or "as sufficiently similar that no reader of a translated text is likely to misunderstand the corresponding meaning of the source text."

## 1.1 *A new focus on translation studies*

In view of the unsatisfactory nature of many translation programs and the failure of many translation theories to provide the kind of help that professional translators can appreciate and that students can creatively employ, more and more persons concerned with translating and interpreting are turning to translation studies to form the empirical basis for a more creative approach to translating and interpreting.

A recent article in an Air France publication offered to travelers contains a fascinating interview in French with an English

translation about Steven Spielberg, the famous motion-picture director. The French text uses the term *noirs* (literally, "blacks") to refer to the extras in the filming of Amistad, a film about slavery in America, but the translator wisely rendered this term as *African-Americans*, and in this way avoided a literal rendering with its negative overtones.

Similarly, the text speaks of Spielberg's astonishing success in one film after another as *Incontestablement, Spielberg a la baraka*, translated as "Spielberg is undeniably on a roll," which represents correctly the meaning of the Semitic expression *baraka* (literally, "blessed"). Furthermore, *on a roll* fits the motion-picture industry very effectively, since it is precisely the command that is often used to start the cameras functioning.

Although the French text has *La MGM, Paramount ou Warner existent depuis trois quarts de siècle*, the English translation has *MGM, Warner Bros. and Paramount have been churning out movies for more than three-quarters of a century*. In this interesting correction of the French text the translator shows clearly his greater knowledge of the American cinema industry and his close attention to detail. First, he introduces the correct designation of *Warner Bros*, and places it in the second position in line with the historical development of these producers. He also correctly renders the French *ou* as *and* (rather than *or*) and changes a generic *existent* to a critical judgment *have been churning out*, a judgment that is in line with other direct and indirect criticisms of the major producers.

The fact that not all language-cultures use similar terms for corresponding positions of responsibility creates special problems for translators. For example, the Spanish term *Presidente* refers to the president of the ruling party in Spain, whose powers are correspondingly much fewer than those of the President of the United States. Actually, the *Presidente de España* functions more as a prime minister, but this is not his title. Accordingly, translations from Spanish into English may need a footnote to explain a curious difference in the use of cognate terms.

Similarly, there were numerous misunderstandings about the role of Mao Tse-tung, who was always addressed simply as "Chairman Mao," but he had far more political and economic power than any other head of state.

## 1.2 Evaluation of potential translators

There is a tendency to accept academic training as a criterion

of expertness in translating, since people think of translators as language professionals, and professionalism is usually judged in terms of years of study. For the translation of a technical volume from French into English about textual problems in the Hebrew Bible, the most promising translator appeared to be a complete French-English bilingual who was an editor of a journal dealing with similar subject matter. But the results were a $16,000 mistake because the translator, as well as a close colleague, simply did not understand the nature of translating. The translator matched the words but not the meaning.

On the other hand, one of the most creative translators I have ever known is Herman Aschmann, a person of limited academic training, but one who became entranced by the cultural content and literary potential of Totonaco, an Indian language of Mexico. Instead of submitting one possible rendering of a biblical expression, he usually had half a dozen different ways of representing the meaning of the Greek text. Not only did he produce an exceptional New Testament in Totonaco, but inspired local people to imitate his skill in discovering more and more meaningful ways of communicating a message into an entirely different language-culture.

Top-notch translators need to have a significant aptitude for interlingual communication, but they also need to be well grounded in the principles of transferring the meaning of a source text into a receptor language. This grounding can best be attained by experience in actual translating under the guidance of expert teachers who can present the principles of translation in terms of their own expert experience. Unfortunately, however, most institutes of translating cannot afford to pay what good translators can make in translating. And as a result, people with inferior training and experience end up teaching what they themselves have difficulty in doing.

If an agency that serves as a link between translators and clients wants to evaluate a translator's ability, it is wise to find out how three or more different translators would render a particular difficult text. Then the translated results should be judged by three or more professional translators. This may seem like an expensive procedure, but it is a far more successful assessment that accepting purely personal judgments that often fail to reveal the

real underlying problems. For example, one reviewer working in a translation agency involved in evaluating translations into Chinese did not let his employer know that he was a speaker of Cantonese rather than Mandarin, and as a result his severe criticisms of translations by Mandarin speakers were seriously faulted. Similarly, an agency should not hire a Portuguese speaker to evaluate translations into Spanish, or even an American to evaluate a translation into British English.

I have lectured on theories of translation in dozens of schools and institutes, but frankly I have not been satisfied with the results, despite the numerous practical examples of interlingual equivalence. For one thing, most people have great difficulties in applying general principles to particular problems. As a result, I have found that so much more can be accomplished by sitting down with translators and helping them spot problems and test various solutions.

Many texts submitted for translation are extremely difficult to understand, although not necessarily as the result of technical terminology or figurative meanings. They are difficult to comprehend because they are so badly written. Frequently there are no indications as to the sequences of events or of ideas, and often there are predicate expressions without subjects. Such texts are many times the result of committee consultations with everyone wanting to insert some of their own ideas and with no one having the responsibility of putting a fragmented text into proper order. Learning to make sense out of nonsense is a huge and seemingly unending task for translators who must deal with the average political, financial, or technical document. And even when translators are able to telephone the writers of a text about problems of comprehension, the translators are often told that they do not need to understand the text; rather, they must simply translate it.

In fact, translators often need instruction and practice in rewriting bad texts into a more understandable form, a type of intralingual translating. Instruction in translating between two forms or levels of the same language should be a regular part of a course in translating. For example, the following sentence occurs in a document on translation theory, "The intercultural relationship of translational issues are translated the way in which we view the translation process." Before trying to translate this English statement directly into another language, which still would not mean anything, it would be much better to translate it into in-

telligible English.

Such intralingual translating also has a supplementary advantage in learning how to edit a text so as to make the meaningful relations between words and phrases as clear as possible. But most textbooks on translating avoid most of these common translational problems by introducing only well written texts.

In Chinese many of the difficult poetic texts are being translated into a more modern form of language, even as Beowulf and the tales of Chaucer have been transformed into modern English.

## 1.3 *Translating versus interpreting*

Some problems arise because people think of translating and interpreting as being two entirely different kinds of operations, one written and the other spoken. But both are part of the same act of producing in a receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source text, whether spoken or written. The significant differences are the speed with which an interpreter must make decisions, the enormous tension to keep up with the rapid flow of spoken language, the background knowledge necessary for instant recall, and the willingness to produce something that may not be "perfect." In fact, no interpretation is ever perfect.

Interpreting can, however, be an important plus for a translator, because it immediately forces him or her to be up to date with respect to rapid developments within any discipline, and it highlights the fact that listening to one language and speaking in another is a largely automatic process, something that some translators have failed to recognize.

At the former Maurice Thorez Institute of foreign languages in Moscow, persons who had already demonstrated exceptional ability as translators could also be tested for their possible ability to act as professional interpreters. The test consisted of an assigned topic, one minute to prepare, and one minute to speak. The reason for this type of testing was the conviction that interpreting, whether consecutive or simultaneous, depended more on an ability to organize information than on determining meaning.

## 1.4 *Translating and related studies*

Many people assume that translating requires considerable

training in linguistics. But this is not true. Some of the best translators have no training whatsoever in linguistics, although some introduction to linguistics can make translating a much more meaningful activity. The essential skill of translators is being able to understand correctly the meaning of a source text. Knowledge of linguistics is, of course, not a handicap, but a distinct asset in clearly distinguishing between the structures of a text and the understanding of a text. Linguists analyze texts, but translators must understand texts.

Translators need to know the meanings of words in particular texts, but not necessarily all the meanings that are listed in comprehensive dictionaries. Similarly, translators do not need to analyze all the layers of grammatical structures if they can comprehend accurately the ways in which they relate to one another. The comprehension of a text as a whole is much more important to a translator than outlining the structural levels, although in some cases identification of the literary structures can provide insight for the correct understanding of a text.

Serious attention may also be required for evaluating the capacity of students to use foreign languages, because most students entering programs of translation are usually not adequately prepared to translate, and as a result they often acquire habits that are not easy to break. The real issue is the best use of students' time and energy in learning a foreign language in the most efficient manner. Great advances have been made in the field of language learning, and programs in language learning should be designed to take advantage of such insights and methods.

At some point in all programs of language learning some experience in translating should be introduced, but not on the elementary level of simply trying to make sense, but at more advanced levels in which translating can test the adequacy of vocabulary for certain types of texts. The translation of various types of texts is particularly useful in highlighting the differences of style in different types of discourse.

Some programs in translation also try to provide students with extensive information about such supplementary fields as computational linguistics and artificial intelligence, but such information is only marginal to the practical concerns of most translators and interpreters. Far more important is the need to appreciate fully the importance of the intended audience. In fact, no translator should begin to work without first knowing who is the intended

audience, as determined by the publisher. For example, is the publication for children, middle-school pupils, university level students, professionals, adults who are retooling for new or expanded careers, or golden-age retirees?

Translators also need to know if a translation would become more relevant if the features of format (paragraphing, indentation, shifts in style, type face, spacing, and bullets) were adjusted to the meaningful elements in the text. In addition, the existence of previously published translations of a text inevitably conditions people's thinking about a revision or a new translation of such texts as the Bible, Shakespeare's dramas, and the Greek and Latin Classics. During the process of translating a series of tests of the translation with representative groups of the presumed audience can always be helpful.

## 1.5 *The contents and structure of this volume*

No book can possibly cover all the elements that influence the work of a translator or interpreter, but this volume at least tries to deal in a systematic way with some of the principal issues. The following chapters attempt to answer the question posed by this chapter, namely, "What is translating?" Accordingly, Chapter 2 is concerned with the relation between language and culture, because a language is always a part of a culture and the meaning of any text refers directly or indirectly to the corresponding culture. Chapter 3 then takes up the issue of translating words in context since the choice of particular words and their meanings depend primarily on various aspects of the context: other nearby words, the subject matter, the presumed audience, and especially the meanings of those words that so often do not mean what they say, for example, figurative expressions, indirect responses, and proverbs.

Chapter 4 focuses on the grammatical connections between words, and Chapter 5 is concerned with the structures and style of discourse and how these influence the translation of a text on all levels. Chapter 6 includes a number of representative treatments of translation, and Chapter 7 discusses three major types of translation theories.

## Chapter 2

# More about Language and Culture

Language is a set of verbal symbols that are primarily auditory, but secondarily written, now in more than 2,200 different languages with more than 400 orthographic systems for computer adaptation. Language also constitutes the most distinctive feature of a culture, which may be described in a simplistic manner as the totality of the beliefs and practices of a society. And although a language may be regarded as a relatively small part of a culture, it is indispensable for both the functioning and the perpetuation of the culture. Accordingly, competent translators are always aware that ultimately words only have meaning in terms of the corresponding culture. But while a language can usually be acquired within a period of ten years, it takes a lifetime to understand and become an integral part of a culture.

In order to understand and appreciate the related roles of language and culture as two interdependent symbolic systems, it may be helpful to describe some of their more relevant similarities, differences, and interrelations. Their similarities can perhaps be best understood in terms of early acquisition, loss, collective activity, variability, change, bundles of features, and sociosemiotic factors. The differences can also be described in terms of language as the most distinctive feature of a culture, a code that can speak about itself, linear arrangement, entities that have no measurable existence, and the underlying forces that sustain and drive the culture. The interrelations between language and culture can then be described in terms of reciprocal modifications, the rates of change, the representation of culture by language, and the issues of double causation.

An utterance normally means something, but speeches by politicians often say nothing, and that is precisely why a group of translators at the United Nations unanimously agreed that the most difficult texts to translate or interpret are those that contain no meaning. A translator or interpreter normally searches for meaning because that is precisely the function of a discourse, but there are speakers who have nothing to say or prefer to speak without saying anything — a skill that some politicians seem to

possess to a point of perfection.

Cultural practices may also be regarded as having meaningful purposes. When a person buys a large home in an exclusive neighborhood, there may be several alternative or overlapping meanings: a place to house a large family, a way of showing off one's wealth, a place for entertaining large numbers of guests, and a good investment. Knowing the appropriate meaning of a nonlinguistic event also depends on the context of who does what, when, where, and for what reason, just as the meaning of the word run depends largely on contexts: *the dogs were running*, *the salmon are running*, *he is running into debt*, *his nose is running*. In fact, the term *run* combines with a number of diverse contexts to provide distinct concepts.

## 2.1. *Similarities between language and culture*

### 2.1.1 *Language and culture acquisition*

Both language and culture are acquired at a very early age and in the largely unstructured contexts of home and playground. Furthermore, both language and culture seem to be frozen by upper adolescence, after which time most people find it very difficult to learn a foreign language without a noticeable accent. They also feel "more at home" in the culture of their upper adolescence, when most of the automatic patterns of behavior are seemingly accepted as the most appropriate.

Children acquire a language at a much earlier age than most people imagine. In one case an American family working for many years in Thailand needed to return to the United States for another assignment, but nine months before their return they had a baby girl. The parents were, however, so occupied with winding up numerous responsibilities that they were forced to leave the baby girl with a Thai maid most of the time.

When the baby was nine months of age, the family returned to the United States and three months later the baby began to speak, but she spoke Thai, not English. During the months with the Thai maid the baby had learned the right tonal patterns, a vocabulary that fit her needs, and an arrangement of words that showed a remarkable instinct for the grammar of Thai.

It is also interesting that children who have grown up speak-

ing a local language may seem to have completely forgotten it after a few years in a completely different language-culture. But a return to the local area somehow prompts an amazing recall of the language. One member of a team of linguists going to Mexico had lived in Spanish-speaking Latin America until the age of twelve, but seemingly had completely forgotten Spanish. But within three months of being in Mexico his Spanish came bouncing back, and he was accused of having deceived his colleagues about not knowing Spanish. Apparently, the mind never forgets anything completely.

The skillful learning of a culture may also occur at a very early age. Most children by two years of age know exactly how to pit their parents against each another in order to get what the children want. They quickly learn the pecking order of their culture, and they know whom they can hit without being hit back.

### 2.1.2 *The loss of a language and culture*

By not participating fully in a language-culture, people may also lose linguistic skills. Many teen-age Navajos in large centers are gradually losing their facility to speak Navajo, although they may still be able to understand what older people say. When being interviewed on radio, they often express their regret in not being able to speak, and they usually blame their university studies for making them linguistically deficient in their mother tongue.

In some instances the loss of language proficiency may involve only one aspect of a mother-tongue competence. For example, in most Protestant Spanish-speaking churches in New Mexico, the entire service is in Spanish, except for the reading of the Bible, which is usually done by laymen in English. The reason for this partial deficiency in one's mother tongue is due to the fact that Spanish is the medium of oral communication, while English is the primary language of written communication: newspapers, magazines, signs, and advertisements.

Young people who pass upper adolescence in a foreign language-culture often prefer to stay abroad. And even after advanced education in the language-culture of their parents, they frequently prefer an overseas job because they seem to feel more at home. This is precisely why American parents on overseas assignment are often urged by their companies to have their children return to the "home country" as soon as they complete their basic

six or eight years of education.

### 2.1.3 Language and culture as collective activities

Both language and culture are collective enterprises, and no one person ever controls completely a language or a culture. Furthermore, only a relatively large group of people can transport a language or a culture from one place to another. For example, a number of Indians along the Caribbean coast of Honduras speak the Miskito language and live their lives like most other Indians along the coast, but in appearance many more closely resemble the people of West Africa. This strange lack of agreement between language-culture and physical features can be explained by the fact that the West African features are due to the fact that most slaves who escaped from the islands of the Caribbean came one or two at a time in small canoes, entirely too few people to carry with them their language or their culture. Accordingly, they intermarried with the local people and adopted their language and culture. In order to retain a language and culture there must be a critical number of interacting people to form and maintain a language-culture.

Even a shaman's chanting to heal a sick person usually depends on the presence of an extended family, who must confess their violations of tribal rules or their hidden jealousies in order to prepare the way for an act of healing. Language and culture are essentially a collective enterprises, whether in talking about building boats with irregularly cut pieces of bread-fruit trees in mid-Pacific islands or in navigating across hundreds of miles of the Pacific Ocean in outrigger canoes.

When indigenous people are first exposed to the outside world and to the diseases for which they have no natural immunity, as many as one half to two thirds of the people may die before they acquire a degree of immunity or resistance. For example, the Paacas Novas people of eastern Peru and Western Brazil died off from a population of 300 to approximately 100 before the remaining fragments of the tribe decided to return to the jungle. The history of the native people of Hawaii is similar, but there was no place to which they could escape.

### 2.1.4 Variability

Variability is the name of the game for both language and cul-

ture. In fact, the voice print of each person is completely distinctive, and persons concerned with identification of people insist that the voice print is even more distinctive than finger prints. Furthermore, two pronunciations of the same phrase by the same person are always somewhat different, in the same way that no two performances of the same dance are ever identical. And an expert cook never twice prepares the same dish in exactly the same way. This makes home-cooking so much less monotonous than restaurant fare.

One effective way to test variability in language is to employ a game involving twelve or more people who are asked to whisper in order a complex sentence of twenty words to the next person in line. An original sentence such as "When they had all arrived, the chairman told them to forget about court procedures but to take an immediate straw vote on guilt or innocence" will probably end up as something like "When the chairman got there, the jury decided that the criminal was guilty."

Groups of people also adopt special ways of speaking, for example, the medical and legal professions, as well as the Mafia of Europe and America and the Triads of Asia. Geographical dialects of a language are typical of what takes place when a language is spoken over an extended area for several centuries, for example, the series Dutch, Low German, High German, and Switzer Dietsch (the German dialect in Switzerland).

People speaking contiguous dialects can usually understand one another, but not the people who are two or more dialects from one another. Within England itself there are dialects of English that are much more diverse than the more or less standard forms of Hong Kong English, New Zealand English, Australian English, Philippines English, Indian English, South African English, British English, and American English. Rather than such different forms of English becoming more and more alike, they are actually becoming more and more distinctive.

What is true of geographical dialects is equally true of sociolinguistic dialects. Received English, the language of the exclusive secondary schools of England, is being threatened by some people in the computer industry who imitate American usage, and there are always those few snobs who want to put on airs by using outlandishly "exalted" language. To my remark about an "unexpected rain" the night before in Southern California, my neighbor

replied, "Oh yes, a little unpremeditated precipitation."

Different interpersonal contexts result in quite different forms of language. These registers of language are typically on five different levels: ritual (the language of ceremonies and rites), formal (language used in speaking to people one does not know), informal (conversing with business colleagues), casual (at a sports event), and intimate (language used within a family), which Joos (1972) describes so effectively in a book entitled "Five Clocks."

The culture also parallels these same five levels of language by having at least five levels of clothing: tuxedo (also called "smoking"), business suit, sports outfit, beachwear, and bathrobe. The style of language used for a particular communication also differs greatly. Churchill could have warned the world about the pain and suffering that World War II would bring by spelling out the loss of life, the sacrifices of labor, and the personal sorrow that the people would experience, but he put it all into three short words, "blood, sweat, tears."

Variability also exists in culture, perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in the way people greet one another. In America exceptionally good friends of the opposite sex kiss once and usually near the mouth but without touching the lips, while in Spain such people kiss twice, first on the right cheek and then on the left cheek. In Belgium people normally kiss three times, right, left, and right, but in France people frequently kiss four times: right, left, right, left.

The system of traffic lights employing green, yellow, and red is quite similar in various parts of the world, but frequently there are variations. In Moscow the yellow light normally occurs before and after a red light, and in some parts of China an illuminated sign indicates the number of seconds before the traffic light will change. In Argentina, however, drivers seem to pay little or no attention to traffic lights. One Argentinean explained his lack of concern for stop lights by saying, "A red light, when there is no car in sight, is an insult to my intelligence."

At Chinese banquets in universities the honored guest is usually seated opposite to the entrance to the dining room, and other persons seat themselves according to their academic rank, but a government official, irrespective of rank, takes precedence over all but the honored guest. In fact, in China government officials have been traditionally referred to as "father and mother offi-

cials," a highly significant terminology in a Confucianist society.

### 2.1.5 *Change*

Change in language is a corollary of its inherent variability. In some instances the change seems to be particularly drastic, for example, the change from Arabic to Roman orthography for writing Turkish, a clear symbol of Turkey's shift from a Middle East orientation to one facing Western Europe.

Shortly after the victory of the Communist leadership in China, many persons in positions of political responsibility urged a change in orthography from typical Chinese characters to an alphabetic system, but such a change was regarded as entirely too radical because it would cut off succeeding generations from the rich heritage of literature and calligraphic art. The leadership did, however, decide to employ simplified characters and even published a list of some 3,000 characters in which all official business should be conducted and reported.

English is one of the major world languages and also the one that has probably borrowed the most from other languages. In fact, less than half of the vocabulary is Anglo-Saxon. Changes, however, may be only partial or affect only certain aspects of a language. For example, Spanish has been very conservative in keeping to traditional distinctions in verb tenses, but very open to changes in spelling, while French has been intensively conservative in spelling but much more open to change in the use of the verb system.

These same seemingly arbitrary decisions with respect to change in language also apply to cultural features. In Great Britain shifting from pounds, shillings, and pence to a decimal system required considerable pressure over a number of years, and the complete shift in America from yards, feet, and inches to a metric system will require a number of more years. But some changes, especially in culture, may be only cosmetic. Some communists in Europe use socialist terminology as a means of hiding their ultimate purposes.

### 2.1.6 *Bundles of linguistic and cultural features*

Rarely does one particular feature of a language or culture oc-

cur alone. For languages there are almost always a bundle of features that combine to communicate a message. The most obvious of these features are the paralinguistic ones of voice quality, speed of utterance, loudness, hesitations, and stuttering — all of which carry along an additional message or impede communication. For example, excessively rapid speech may indicate that the speaker has far more to say than the time allotted, but it can also mean an attempt to hide the real content by speaking more rapidly than people can understand.

Constant interrupting of a speaker in a social setting is regarded as very bad in most of northern Europe and America, but in the Mediterranean areas it is not only an approved feature, but people defend their intrusions by saying that by interrupting they show the speaker that they are interested in what is being said.

Language and culture often combine in a kind of symbiosis. In the United States people normally stand about one arm's length apart when conversing, but in the eastern part of the Mediterranean world people are usually not more than half that distance apart. Accordingly, North Americans tend to react negatively to what seems to be aggressiveness by people in the Middle East, while local people interpret the action of North Americans as being too standoffish and unfriendly.

In some societies the amount of time that a person must wait before responding to what has been said is astonishingly long. When Tarahumara Indians in northern Mexico are discussing an important issue, turn-taking normally requires that a second speaker must not only wait for the first speaker to complete what he wishes to say, but he must continue to remain silent for at least as long as the first speaker spoke. Only then is it polite to present a different viewpoint. Time spent waiting becomes a signal to the audience that the following speaker has thoroughly considered everything said by the previous speaker, but he still disagrees. Such discussions seem interminably long to Americans, who expect a respondent to immediately jump to his feet. Furthermore, among the Tarahumara gestures are regarded as particularly offensive because they appear to represent physical threats.

Culture is also expressed by bundles of features. For example, in Brazil clothing is a major element in marking class distinctions. And in proportion to income Brazilians expend much more for attractive clothing than do North Americans. But in England some of the richest persons seem to prefer their old rumpled clothing as

an inverted symbol of their status. In other words that have so much money that they do not have to dress well to symbolize their position in society.

Sometimes a cultural feature may be so overdone that people need to find a more practical solution. During banquets in China people enjoy series of toasts to almost anyone and for almost every purpose. But this usually requires everyone to stand up and reach out, even across a wide table, to clink glasses with each person. After a while this can be too much, and accordingly, more and more people are simply clinking their glasses on the revolving glass serving center.

American business letters are usually relatively short and right to the point, but a literal translation of such letters into Spanish almost always gives Latin Americans the impression that North Americans are unfriendly. On the other hand, letters coming from Latin America to North American business men are frequently so effusive with praise that the writers seem insincere. Intelligent bilingual secretaries soon resolve such problems by deleting effusive praise from letters coming from Latin America and by adding expressions that will make their American bosses appear more friendly to business men in Latin America.

### 2.1.7 *Sociosemiotic elements in language and culture*

The most obvious sociosemiotic features of language and culture are iconic (based on similarity), deictic (based on association), and conventional, without any formal connection between form and meaning.

One of the most common iconic features of language is the parallelism between temporal and narrative sequences in history, novels, biography, and even prophecy. The cultural iconic signs are even more obvious, for example, a roadside sign of a knife and fork to indicate a restaurant in Europe and America. Almost all designations for toilets include stylized pictures of a woman wearing a skirt and of a man with full length straight pants.

Typical deictic signs are usually two-dimensional in English, *here/there*, *this/that* but in Spanish there is an unusual three dimensional contrast: *aquí* "here," *allí* "there," and *allá* "there even further away." Familiar cultural signs include arrows to

point the way, painted lines to mark traffic boundaries, and painted piping to show the flow of various substances in chemical plants.

Most vocabulary of any and all languages is conventional, that is, there is no one-to-one relation between the sounds and the meanings of words. Furthermore, the boundaries of meaning of practically all words in any language are fuzzy and indefinite. For example, how thick must a thread be in order for it to be called a string, or how thick does a string have to be before it is called a cord, or how thick is a cord before it is regarded as a rope. Government bureaus on weights and measures usually legislate such matters for the sake of taxes and import duties, but for the general public all such words have very indefinite boundaries of meaning.

But sets of words are not restricted to such obviously related series as *thread*, *string*, *cord*, *rope*, etc. There are a number of different kinds of meaningfully related sets of terms:

Clusters: *run*, *walk*, *dance*, *jump*
Inclusions: *walk* as including *shuffle*, *amble*, *march*, *parade*
Overlapping: *love/like*, *dine/eat*, *chew/masticate*
Reversives: *tie/untie*, *brief/debrief*
Direction of participation: *borrow/lend*, *buy/sell*
Positive/negative: *yes/no*, *affirm/deny*
Series
  Infinite: *one*, *two*, *three*, etc.
  Repetitive: *Monday*, *Tuesday*, *Wednesday*, etc.
  Graded: *private*, *sergeant*, *corporal*, *lieutenant*, *major*, etc.

Within a culture there are also important sets constituting cultural domains, for example, eating, bathing, talking. The set involving eating relates to time, place, with whom, what, how and the order in which food is served and eaten.

### 2.1.8 *Illogical features of language and culture*

For the most part the systematic relations of meaning within semantic domains seem to be quite logical. Some numerical systems are built on series of 10s, others on 20s and still others on a so-called blanket system based on the process of folding cloth, but

even in the decimal systems there are a number of unsystematic sets, for example, in English the numbers *eleven* and *twelve* are not consistent with the following numbers ending in — *teen*, for example, *thirteen*, *fourteen*, etc. In French the number system becomes irregular at several points, for example, 70 is literally "sixty-ten" and 80 is "four-twenties."

The meaning of compound words cannot always be determined by the constituent parts, for example, in English a *set-up* and an *up-set* are distinctly different although they contain the same verbal components. It is the arrangement that counts.

The ordinal and cardinal numbers of the months do not fit in English. For example, the names of the last four months of the year, namely, *September*, *October*, *November*, *December* contain the Latin numbers for seven, eight, nine, and ten, but these are the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth months of the year. This anomaly occurred because Roman calendar-makers wanted the year to begin at the time of the Roman Saturnalia festival when the sun began to return north. People would rather live with an anomaly than alter the names.

There are also numerous anomalies in culture. For example, in order to take advantage of longer days during the summer, it is much easier to turn back the clock than it is to adjust to a presumably different time of day. In the Western World people pay to have their fortune told, even when most of the generalities never prove true. But in India a person can pay to have a guru tell them the nature of their earlier reincarnations. First, a person's finger print is taken and then presumably matched with an infinite number of existing figure prints and at last a scribe reads off what has been written down on seemingly endless rolls. As can be readily recognized, reading reincarnations is a much safer and easier profession than fortune-telling.

### 2.1.9 *The location of language and culture*

Many people wrongly assume that language and culture must exist in dictionaries, grammars, and encyclopedias, but this is obviously not true. Such books are only limited attempts to describe some of the more salient features of these two interrelated patterns of behavior. The real location of language and culture is in the heads of participants.

There is a wide-spread account of Bloomfield's answer to an

inquiry about how long it would take him to write a complete grammar of the English language. He is claimed to have said that if he had twenty well-trained linguistic assistants and twenty years, he could probably produce a fairly accurate account of the English language. But by that time the language would no doubt have changed significantly, and according he would never be able to catch up.

When any author reviews his own early publications, he soon realizes how rapidly languages change, but also how tenacious are some of the awkward illogical forms, for example, the irregular forms of the verb *to be: am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *been* as well as how quickly an abbreviation like *Ms*, as a compromise between *Miss* and *Mrs*, can be accepted.

### 2.2.1 *Language as a distinctive part of culture*

Although language is clearly a part of culture, it is also one of its most distinctive features. One night I was waiting for a plane in the Cairo airport, when in came a group of people speaking Japanese, but they did not behave like Japanese. There was no tourist guide carrying a little flag, and the men did not gather around a prestigious man, nor did the women gather around a prestigious woman. Furthermore, the people were noisy as they mixed freely, joked, and laughed. In addition, they did not dress like Japanese tourists.

I became so curious about these people that I finally spoke to a woman who appeared to be rather cosmopolitan in her behavior, and I asked in English, "Where do you come from?" to which she immediately replied, "Oh, we're all Americans from Hawaii." The people had retained their language, but had so radically changed their other patterns of behavior that they seemed to constitute a cultural anomaly.

### 2.2.2 *Distinctive elements of language*

Language is not only a distinctive feature of a group of people, but it is also different from other codes in that it can be used to speak about itself. This means that language can be used to describe its own structures. Written codes, whether alphabetic, syllabic, or ideographic (as in the case of Chinese), are all secondary

in the sense that they are codes to represent language. The DNA, however, is also a primary code, but it is not able to be used to analyze itself.

Language is also structurally linear in that it moves in one spatial direction, although it may combine with gesture codes (movements of face, hands, head, shoulders, and stance) to reinforce and even to negate the meaning of words, as in the case of a screamed utterance of "I love you!" while twisting the face into a picture of hate.

Although language is rightfully described as structurally linear, the understanding of language does not precede in merely one direction. The real meaning of a word may depend on a context that occurs on a following page. Furthermore, fast reading of a text using a system described as "speed reading" depends on assimilating the meaning of a passage by reading successively different portions of a page containing three or four lines at a time. Moreover, in reading narrow-column texts, as in most newspapers and popular magazines, a reader does not look back and forth for each line, but simply glides rapidly down the text while concentrating on the content vocabulary and passing over many formal markers, such as prepositions and conjunctions, since the meaning of such linking words is usually predictable from the contexts. At the same time, however, close attention must be given to negatives and modals of probability, for example *may*, *could*, *possibly*.

This process of reading is essentially based on the principle of reading by contexts rather than by lines, since so frequently the meaning of words depends on what follows rather than on what precedes.

Understanding oral language precedes very much the same way. In general, a hearer does not tick off the meanings of words one at a time, but assimilates a language by chunks, as much as twenty seconds at a time. This process usually works quite well as long as a person understands clearly the topic of the discourse. Otherwise, a series of comments, without a topic to which to relate the comments, can be very frustrating.

### 2.2.3 *The creation of cultural symbols*

A culture creates and endows certain entities with important cultural significance. A path may become for some tribal people a way of explaining their traditional way of life. As long as the

people can remember, each generation has walked the same path. For the Buddhist world, however, the wheel is the appropriate symbol to represent constant change that always reverts to its original position, a kind of rotational reincarnation. Other cultures live in the shadow of a golden age, which was not really so golden, but it seems to constitute a goal to recapture. But still other cultures place their trust in a messiah who will come at the critical point in history and remake the chaotic world.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of culture is its capacity to treat as real a number of entities and concepts that have no measurable existence, for example, mermaids, unicorns, demons, jinns, angels, heaven, hell, reincarnation, horoscopes, clairvoyance, fortune telling, a rabbit's foot, tea leaves, and lines in a person's hand.

A culture may actually reinterpret a symbol. Classical Greeks regarded the *daimones* as beneficent intermediaries between the gods and humans, but the Christians largely transformed such spiritual entities into fearful demons.

### 2.2.4 *Language as a four-level system*

Language consists of four distinct levels of signs: sounds, words, grammar, and discourse, with seemingly no one central cerebral region for integration or control of verbal communication. But for culture there seem to be certain drives that combine to make decisions favorable to each person: especially, self-preservation, power, and belonging. Self-preservation seems to be one of the most fundamental drives, even in circumstances in which death would seem to be much more advantageous. The concern for power, whether political, physical, or monetary, is also a vital factor in making decisions, but many people place an even higher price on the sensation of being accepted and belonging to others.

### 2.2.5 *The use of language by culture*

Culture makes constant use of language to perform its crucial functions of (1) providing information about the processes and the values of a culture (education is mastering the information regarded as essential for being a part of a society), (2) directing the ac-

tivity of a culture (traditionally described as the imperative function), (3) establishing and maintaining a positive emotional state for the participants within a culture (the emotive function), (4) ritual alteration in the status of participants in a culture, for example, marriage vows, sentencing of criminals, religious ritual, internment of the dead (the performative function), (5) interpersonal relations (who speaks to whom about what and in what manner), (6) cognitive activity (the most common use of language is in thinking, although some thoughts are not necessarily expressed in words), (7) recreative (the use of language in games, for example, scrabble, crossword puzzles, word-guessing games on television, verbal challenges involving poetry and song), and (8) aesthetics, the use of language for aesthetic expression, especially in poetry and elegant prose.

## 2.3 *Interrelations between language and culture*

### 2.3.1 *Differences in culture mean differences in language*

Because Hebrew, Greek, and Latin all had three distinct terms for *body*, *soul*, *spirit*, people throughout the Middle Ages in Western Europe thought that there must be three fundamental aspects or parts of human personality. Descartes, however, insisted that in place of three features there are only two: the physical and the nonphysical, a distinction that has largely dominated popular psychology until now. But more and more neurophysiologists and psychologists find no way to separate the body and the spirit. The fact that fully 50% of diseases have certain psychosomatic factors involved has seemed further evidence that people do not consist of two parts, but only of one complex unity, as argued so effectively in the recent volume, "*Descarte's Error*" by Domasio (1994).

When a culture experiences radical change, the vocabulary also undergoes corresponding alterations. For example, the cattle-raising Anuaks of the Sudan and Ethiopia had thousands of technical terms for various colors, shapes, sizes, and ages of cattle, but at one time they had only one word for everything made of metal. But after the arrival of small steam boats on the tributaries to the Nile and after airplanes began landing on the lakes made by the

meandering rivers, the Anuaks starting living and working in a different technological world. Within a few years they created thousands of new terms for parts of motor boats and airplanes, as well as for electric lights, flashlights, motors, and even computers. All of these changes have brought radical changes of wealth and power for a society that has had a long tradition of belief in "limited good," that is to say, the existence of only so much "good" in the world, and anyone who seems to have a disproportionate amount of possessions or power, must have taken some of these "goods" away from others.

In the neighboring Shilluk tribe family members destroyed a young orchard planted by a younger brother who was likely to become much richer than any other member of the family. He would then have much more spirit power than any one else, and this would destroy the family solidarity. Among the Hopi Indians of the Southwest United States something of this same attitude exists, and accordingly children hesitate to excel in school because this tends to disturb the sense of equality within a group.

## 2.3.2 *The rate of change in language and culture*

The rate of change within a language-culture depends on a number of factors. But in almost all situations the change in culture appears to be faster than change in language. This conservatism in language has an important implication for self-preservation, since the need to communicate effectively needs to be something so conservative that people will have no doubts as to the meaning of a sentence. But it does seem strange that languages also appear to change directly proportionate to the density of communication. It would seem only natural that peripheral dialects would change more rapidly than a central dialect since they would be only on the edge of a speech community. Nevertheless, it is the dense center of language use that undergoes the greatest and the most rapid change. In other words the language of Paris changes faster than the French of Guadeloupe or New Caledonia. Similarly, the English spoken from Boston to Washington DC is changing faster than the English of Memphis Tennessee or Prince Edward Island in Canada.

High-school students in Iceland can read and understand Icelandic sagas from 9th Century, while Americans have great difficulty trying to understand Chaucerian English from the 14th

Century.

### 2.3.3 *Partial representation of the culture by language*

Language represents the culture because the words refer to the culture, as the beliefs and practices of a society, but the representation is never complete or perfect. Changes in language inevitably tend to lag behind changes in culture, but there are also aspects of culture that are so taken for granted that people simply do not feel the need for terminology to talk about what is completely obvious. For certain aspects of experience there may be a significant shortage of specific terms. For example, the verb *lie* refers to saying or writing something that is not true, and a person can use *prevaricate* (with the usual implication of oral language) or *falsify* (often related to documents). But what about *white lies* (those that generally do no harm to anyone, other than to the liar) and *black lies* (those that are obviously untruths and harmful). But there are also exaggerations that cross the line into lies, and there are understatements that do the same. There are also political promises that everyone, including the speaker, realizes can never prove true, and there is also slanted advertising, justified because it offers the audience "a chance to decide for themselves." Perhaps so much of modern life is a lie that we are numbed to the distinctions that constantly assail us on television, bill boards, newspapers, magazines, internet, and books.

### 2.3.4 *Double causation*

In many parts of Africa violent death is usually attributed to double causation. A man killed by lightning is first the victim of the lightning bolt, but most African medicine men will also claim that someone must have been practicing black magic so as to make sure that the man would be in precisely the place where the lightning would strike.

People who believe in horoscopes likewise believe in double causation, because good luck or tragedy must be due in part to favorable or unfavorable positions of the planets and stars at the time of a person's birth. This is simply astronomical predeterminism or predestination. Those who find solace in tea leaves or in

crystals are likewise addicts of double causation. But perhaps those who attribute all good and evil fortune to saints, angels, jinns, or the spirits in the caves are similarly to be pitied.

## Chapter 3

# Words in Context

Anyone attempting to understand the meaning of words in context should probably first consider some of the serious misconceptions about their meanings, especially the idea that the words of any language constitute a rich mosaic of terms that fit together neatly into various semantic domains or fields. There are no neat verbal mosaics, because the meanings of words constantly overlap with one another and the boundaries of meaning are fuzzy and poorly defined, for example, the series *love* , *like* , *adore* , *worship* , *be crazy about* , *be head over heals in love with* . Even in the short series of *sprint* , *dash* , *race* there is considerable overlapping in referring to the act of rapid running. *Sprint* seems to focus more on the rapid and effective movement of the legs, and *race* suggests competition, while *dash* appears to emphasize simply fast movement in space, without regard to style. The real clues to meaning depend on contexts.

In some sets of terms there may be quite evident features of degree, for example, *work* , *labor* , *toil* , *slave* , but the relative amount of effort involved cannot be plotted mathematically because so much depends on the particular contexts in which such words occur.

Most people assume that the meaning of nouns derived from verbs can be easily recognized because they have predictable meanings, especially when a verb occurs with the common suffix *-er* . But the word *runner* does not always refer to someone who runs. For example, *runner* may also refer to a long piece of metal on which a sled or sleigh glides, or even to the blade of ice-skates. But *runner* may also refer to a long, narrow rug used in a hall or to a slender stolon of a straw berry bush, or even to a smuggler who must run blockades. This same suffix may also occur on stems that never occur in isolation, for example, *carpenter* , but as *or* in *doctor* and *benefactor* as well as *-eur* in *chauffeur* ( borrowed from French ).

Some people believe that knowledge of the true meanings of words depends on knowing the history of their development, but etymology is often quite misleading. For example, most people as-

sume that the component *by-* in *bylaw*, *byproduct*, *bypath* refers to some type of subordinate or derived *law*, *product*, *path*. Historically, however, the *by-* in *bylaw* is derived from *burgh*, that is, the law of a town, not of a county or province, but its meaning has been reinterpreted to refer to a law that is not a part of a constitution but is a supplementary document defining more specifically some of the provisions of a constitution.

Conversely, most people assume that *duck* in *he shot a duck* and *he tried to duck a blow* must represent an entirely different kind of word history. In reality, however, the two occurrences of *duck* are historically related and are based on the typical behavior of a water fowl that is famous for ducking under the surface of the water.

Although most people assume that languages are essentially unchangeable, the truth is that all living languages are in the constant process of change. Sometimes the change is rapid and obvious, as when the English term *gay* became primarily a designation of homosexuals. In Spanish the verb *coger*, a very common term traditionally meaning "to take," became a common expression for having sexual intercourse.

Because many languages form new words by adding words together, that is, by compounding, as in *breakwater*, *gaspipe*, *nonsense*, *gentleman*, some people assume that this is what always happens. But some words are the result of shortening, for example, *intercom* for *intercommunication system* and *photo* for *photograph*.

Many people also believe that dictionaries are the final authority and depository of all the words of a language. There are, however, some words that never get into a dictionary, for example, short-lived adolescent slang and rapidly evolving technical terms of science. In fact, by the time a dictionary is compiled and published it is almost always at least twenty-five years out of date, especially in the listing of idioms.

In many instances dictionaries become so succinct that they do not help a reader. For example, the relatively common term *carbohydrate* is defined as "any of a class of organic compounds that are polyhydroxy aldehydes or polyhydroxy ketones, or change to such substances on simple chemical transformations, as hydrolysis, oxidation, or reduction." If a person can understand this definition, then he certainly doesn't need to look up the word *carbohydrate*. The definition is true but almost meaningless for the ma-

jority of people who want information about the substances that make up a carbohydrate. For translators encyclopedias are often much more helpful than dictionaries.

Many people assume that lists of synonyms provide all the words that mean the same as a key term. In reality, however, there are no complete synonyms in the sense of two words having exactly the same designative (denotative) and associative (connotative) meanings. One dictionary lists as synonyms of *form* the following terms: *mold*, *appearance*, *cast*, *cut*, *figure*, *shape*, *outline*, but such terms approximate the meaning of *form* only in highly specific contexts. Other dictionaries list as synonyms of *distress* such words as *anguish*, which seems much more emotional in content, and *hardship*, which is much less acute than *distress*. Actually, the listing of synonyms and antonyms is largely misleading because the necessary contexts that would justify assembling such terms into semantic domains or fields are not given.

Because both dictionaries and grammars seem to focus on the rules and laws of a language, they suggest to many people that languages are essentially regular and completely rule governed. In fact some of the most interesting aspects of language are swept away by some linguists as mere subcategorizations. But for English even the regularities of the orthography largely mask the irregularities of the pronunciations. Past tense verb forms such as *judged*, *clipped*, *grabbed*, *picked* are all monosyllabic, pronounced as *jujd*, *clipt*, *grabd*, *pikt*, in which the final consonant is voiced or voiceless depending on the preceding consonant, but a word such as *landed* consists of two syllables in which the second syllable consists of a central vowel followed by a d. The doubling of the medial consonants and the regularity of the written form of words (an aspect of graphemics, rather than phonemics) is probably an advantage for the average reader of English.

In comparison with a number of other languages in the Indo-European family, English seems much more regular in its formations, but for some of its most common words the changes in tense forms are extensive, for example, *make/made*, *go/went*, *am/are/is/was/were/be/been*. Such irregularities can only be explained by the fact that these words are so common; otherwise, they would have been leveled by analogy to regular formations.

## 3.1 The types and functions of contexts in understanding texts

### 3.1.1 Syntagmatic contexts

In determining the meanings of words the role of the context is maximized and the role of any focal element is minimized, which means that the context actually provides more distinctiveness of meaning than the term being analyzed (Joos. 1972). Note, for example, the meaning of *run* in contexts such as *the boy was running* and *the horse was running*. The movement of the feet is different for bipeds and quadrupeds, but there are repeated instances in which no foot is in touch with the supporting surface. It is this distinction that provides a basis for distinguishing between *run* and *walk*. And although relative speed is an important factor, it is not determinative because there can be *stationary running* or *running in place*. Furthermore, some people can walk faster than others can run.

But what is to be done in applying this same definition to the running of a crab along a beach. At least two feet are in touch with the surface at all times, and with *a snake running across the lawn* there are no feet and the body is in continuous contact with the supporting surface. All of these instances of fast movement by an animate being seem to fit together into a type of running, although the different minor distinctions are certainly relevant. All of these movements do, however, seem to belong to the same general class of rapid movement in space by an animate being. But even in these examples the concept of rapid movement in space depends on the combination of *run* and the context of an animate creature.

In causative constructions such as *he ran the horse in the second race*, there are two actions, what the person responsible for the horse actually did in getting the horse entered into the second race, and what the horse did in doing the running.

What, however, is the best way to treat such expressions as *the salmon are running*, *the blue fish are running*, *the porpoises are running*? The physical context is water, not land, and there are fins and flippers, not feet. In the statement *the salmon are running* the wider context of what we know about salmon in the Northern Pacific means that vast numbers of salmon are swimming upstream to the very ponds where they were hatched some

three or four years earlier. There the salmon return to breed and die.

For the statement *the blue fish are running*, the usual implication is that there are large schools of such fish and that they are biting, and although the porpoises are mammals, not fish, a statement that they are running is parallel to a reference about fish.

In analyzing a series of uses of a word such as *run* should there be a difference based on the context of land versus water? Most speakers of English would seem to agree that this would be significant, but no final decision can be made until all different "uses of *run* in context" can be carefully studied, because there are always marginal uses that do not neatly fit any classification. For example, Americans are very likely to say, *she ran over to the neighbors to borrow some sugar* or *he ran down town to get some more ice-cream because so many more people came to the picnic*. It would be extremely rare for either the woman or the man to have actually run. The first statement focuses more on the short period of time, and in the second sentence the man would presumably have taken a car to go to town. These two uses of *run* focus on the brief period of time and not on the actual physical movement.

But *run* may also occur in a number of additional contexts, for example, *the clock is running*, *his heart is running*, *the machine is running*, *the car is running*. These sentences involve different types of internal, and usually mechanized, running, since even in the case of the last sentence, namely, *the car is running*, the reference is normally not to the movement of the car but to the movement of the engine left running.

In the context *he ran the car down the hill* there are also two activities, the driving and the movement of the car, in which case the first may be regarded as causative and the second as participational, but there are also other different kinds of running, for example, *the water is running*, *the faucet is running*, *his nose is running*, *the flour is running out of the bag*, in which there is a movement of a mass, either liquid or dry. The use of *faucet* or *nose* is obviously an indirect reference to a liquid mass.

For contexts about more or less scheduled transportation by vehicles, the verb run has been traditionally employed, for example, *the bus runs between the end of Manhattan and 125th Street*, *a fast train runs each day from Chicago to San Francisco*, *a Cunard Line ship runs regularly between New York and Cherbourg*. But until twenty years ago most Americans in the Northeast spoke of

commercial airplanes as *flying* from one place to another. Gradually, however, people are more frequently using the verb run, especially for frequent, scheduled trips, for example, *a plane runs every hour on the hour from New York to Washington D.C.*

The verb *run* may also refer to extension, for example, *the play ran for three months, the line ran off the page, the bill ran to sixty dollars, the rose bush ran along the fence.*" In all of these instances *run* combines with words to refer to extent of time, space, or quantity. The final example, namely, *the rose bush ran along the fence*, may refer either to a state or to a process of growth, but in all of these typical uses of *run* the meaning is a combination of *run* and the context. And the context obviously contributes far more to the resulting concept than the verb *run*. Accordingly, it would seem wise to regard the various occurrences of *run* as instances of molecular meaning, rather than of atomic meaning. Instead of treating the verb *run* as having a hundred or so meanings, with different words in the context pointing to the right meaning, it seems much better to regard the appropriate lexical unit as consisting of the verb *run* plus the context. In other words, instead of thinking of *run* and the context as two atomic units, it would appear much more realistic to combine the verb *run* and the context into a "semantic molecule."

In addition to these frequently occurring examples of *run* in various contexts, there are a number of minor types, for example, *the dye is running, the color is running* (a reference to loss of color or discoloration) *the boulder ran down the hill, the loose hubcap ran into the ditch* (movement caused by gravity or thrust), *he ran two thousand copies of the book* (a matter of publication), *they ran him in the spring election* (a process of being elected to a political position) *a run on the stock exchange* (an overwhelming demand for liquidation of assets) *the cow ran dry, the well ran dry* (a process of change of state) *he ran 2,000 head of cattle on his ranch* (a reference to pasturing) *the business runs very efficiently* (management of an institution) *her stocking is running, the sleeve of his sweater has a run in it* (a reference to the unravelling of knitted wear).

Although the above occurrences of *run* together with different types of contexts are not exhaustive, they do illustrate certain important advantages over the traditional tendency to consider a verb such as *run* as having an inherent number of meanings and the contexts only pointing to the correct interpretation. It is not

only more relevant to recognize the important role of the contexts, but especially for translators it is also more significant to consider both the focal term and the contexts as constituting molecular units. It would be a mistake, however, to insist that such a molecular approach to lexical meaning is the only way to deal with multiple semantic uses of terms.

The verb *run* occurs in a number of partial and complete idiomatic structures with *into* and *down* (Makkai, 1972). In the statement *John ran into the house* the component *ran into* may be understood in a completely literal sense if John was physically running and ended up inside the house. But if the context shows that John was in a car at the time he ran into the house, then *into* is not used in its literal sense of being within an enclosure but indicates impact, in which the car would normally be more damaged than the house.

But it is also possible to say *on the first day of the convention John ran into his friend Jim in the publications section*. The chances are that John was not actually running but simply encountered his friend in unexpected circumstances. Since the likelihood is that John was not actually running, the combination *ran into* needs to be treated as a full idiom, because neither component of the phrase is to be understood in its normal sense.

In the statement *he ran down the hill* both components *ran* and *down* are no doubt to be understood in their literal meanings, but in the sentence *they ran down the opposition with scurrilous propaganda* the combination *ran down* is clearly an idiom. On the other hand, the statement *they ran down the criminal* may be a semi-idiom if the criminal was chased and finally caught, or a complete idiom if *ran down* refers merely to identification.

The verb *run* may also refer to extension in the context *the road runs along the ridge of the mountains*, but this usage overlaps somewhat with the concept of shape in talking about entities, for example, *the road winds through the valley*, *the road follows the bends in the river*, *the road turns just beyond the bridge*.

Some verbs, however, are primarily only markers of so-called "voice," as in the case of *make* used as a causative: *the captain made the men run through the woods*, *he made a liquid into a solid* (cause to become or happen), *he made a good statesman* (become), *the ship made port* (cause to be at an appropriate place or state), *make believe* (cause to be considered true), *make a speech* (cause to happen), *make sense* (cause to be meaningful in a some

context).

The context not only determines how a word is to be understood, but also how it is to be translated. For example, in Chinese terms for "fish" and "water" do not "run." When a "fish runs" it "disappears," and when "water runs" it "leaks."

Some people find it helpful to study distinctions in meaning in sets of words having the same initial component, for example, the element *out-* in the series *outcast*, *outclass*, *outcrop*, *outdo*, *outline*, *outlook*, *outfit*, *outlast*, *outlaw*, *outpost*, *outrank*, *outsell*, *outvote*, *outwit*, in which there are two quite different semantic functions of *out-*: (1) beyond certain limits, either physical or sociological, *outcast*, *outcrop*, *outlook*, *outlaw*, *outpost* and (2) beyond an expected degree: *outclass*, *outdo*, *outrank*, *outsell*, *outvote*, *outwit*. But the terms *outfit* and *outline* do not seem to fit either category.

Other people find it interesting and helpful to study series of phrases having one component the same, but with quite different meanings for the key combinations. An excellent set of examples of molecular units includes *soft egg* (only partially cooked), *soft music* (low volume of sound), *soft touch* (either touching a surface lightly or a person who can be easily appealed to for help), *soft spot* (an area that yields readily to touch), *soft drink* (an effervescent, nonalcoholic beverage), *soft focus* (a photograph with somewhat indistinct lines), *soft heart* (generous attitude), *soft pedal* (to understate certain differences), *soft sell* (selling without putting on pressure to buy), *soft spoken* (low volume of speech), *software* (computer program), *soft wood* (wood from nondeciduous trees, which may actually be harder than the wood of some deciduous trees).

These various types of syntagmatic contexts represent the principal means by which most people learn the meanings of at least 95% of their active and passive vocabulary. In fact, many people have a vocabulary of 25,000 words or more, without ever having looked up a word in a dictionary. But these syntagmatic types of contexts are only one of several kinds of contexts that are relevant for understanding the meaning of a text.

### 3.1.2 *Paradigmatic contexts*

In many instances, however, it is important to determine the meanings of terms on the basis of contrasts and comparisons with

the meanings of related words within the same paradigmatic set, for example, *talk*, *whisper*, *babble*, *murmur*, *stutter*, *sing*, *hum*. These seven terms all belong to the domain of noise produced by speech organs, but there are also very clear distinctions in meaning, based on such features as verbalization, musical pitch, repetition, and voicelessness.

The word *talk* is the most common term and may be characterized as verbal, nonmusical, and alternating between voicing and voicelessness. But *whisper* generally refers to speech in which the vocal cords do not vibrate, except in the case of *stage whisper* (used in dramatic performances) in which there is a vibration of the vocal cords but also heavy breathiness that gives the impression of lack of vibration of the vocal cords. *Babbling* is a type of pseudoverbal performance, with alternating voicing and voicelessness, while *murmur* is masked, low-volume speech. The term *stuttering* designates a kind of speech in which phrase-initial consonants or syllables are repeated several times and often the meaning of the utterance is largely masked. *Singing*, however, involves both verbalization and musical pitch, while *humming* is nonverbal but has musical pitch.

Various types of self-propelled movement, for example, *march*, *dance*, *walk*, *hop*, *skip*, *jump*, may also be described in terms of certain distinctive features. For example, *march* is walking rhythmically, usually in company with other persons, while *dance* is also rhythmic, but involves a number of different possible movements of the feet and legs (as well as torso, arms, hands, and head in some cultures). The meaning of *walk* implies various types of movement in space by alternating movements of the lower limbs, although it is possible to mimic this movement by walking on one's hands.

*Hopping* normally involves only one foot at a time, and *skipping* involves a double forward movement, first with one foot and then with the other, and *jumping* may involve both feet at the same time or with a running start a single foot in taking off and one or both feet in landing.

The analysis of meaningful distinctions between words within a single domain can be very helpful in finding precisely the right manner to represent the meaning of a source-language text. But there are certain disadvantages in that people do not realize that such meanings seem much more distinctive than their really are. The semantic boundaries of all meanings are fuzzy and indefinite

(Nida, 1975).

### 3.1.3 *Contexts involving cultural values*

Differences of cultural value are also important factors in understanding a series of related terms, for example, *nigger*, *negro*, *colored*, *black* and *Afro-American* representing in each instance a desire to avoid or to employ expressions that are culturally insulting. Unfortunately, however, in some instances substitutes are misleading. For example, *janitors* in universities are often called *building engineers* so as to avoid depreciated the activity of people who sometimes make more money than do the professors. But the terminology can also be misleading.

The typical vocabulary of certain occupations also carries important information about status and behavior, for example, the professional dialects of lawyers and doctors, who often seem to use words to reinforce their social status rather than to communicate important information to clients. But the dialects of the Mafia in Europe and the Triads in Asia have an added purpose of not being understandable to persons that are not a part of the group.

Dialects are often described as being horizontal if they refer to people living in different areas, for example, Cockney vs. Midlands dialect in Great Britain and in New England *Bah Hahbah* for *Bar Harbor*. Such differences are often employed in novels to highlight distinctions in social class.

In many respects the vertical sociolinguistic dialects are even more significant since they carry so much information about the education and social class of participants. Compare, for example, southern Appalachian *you'unz* and *y'oll* for *you all* in standard English. Sociolinguistic dialects are extremely important in some novels since the deviations from standard usage often serve to mark more honest, reliable characters. In traditional American society farmers are usually regarded as more upright that city dwellers.

Correct technical terminology also serves to mark a statement as reliable and the writer as knowledgeable, for example, terms in computer technology, *enhanced mode*, *mouse*, *back-up files*, *cartridge fonts*, *antivirus*, *autoexec.bat files*, *compressed drives*, *directory tree*, *doubleclick*, *erase command*, *floppy disks* (even when disks are no longer floppy), *laptop*, *memmaker*, *menude-*

*fault*, *notepad*, *online help*, *optimizing windows*, *program manager*, *scrolling*, *key-swap file*. But correct terminology also serves as a context for highlighting technical content and providing a basis for recognizing the possible technical meanings of other words.

Some terms may simply serve to suggest emotive responses. For example, in American English such words as *nation*, *apple pie*, *mother*, *stars and stripes* provide a positive emotional setting, while for most people words such as *junky*, *garbage*, *bastard*, *punk*, *slut* are emotively negative, but speakers may differ radically about the emotive values of such words as *communism*, *socialism*, *free enterprise*, *homosexual*.

### 3.1.4 *Contexts that favor radical shifts in meaning so as to attract attention*

Figurative meaning is a frequent technique to attract attention. For example, the term *delicious* in the phrase *delicious idea* has nothing to do with taste, but with a pleasurable attitude toward some concept. Likewise, a travel agency in Brussels attempts to attract customers by means of a sign *Stop and Go*.

Some contexts, however, require expressions to provide meaning without stating precisely what is involved. When an investigator sought information from the Sorbonne University in Paris about a professor from the Middle East who was supposed to be extremely poor, the clerk in the department of personnel could not give a direct answer, because this would be ethnically unacceptable, and so she remarked, "He has an apartment in the Continental Hotel," which at that time the most expensive hotel in Paris. Nothing more needed to be said.

Most proverbs also occur in contexts that show that they should not be understood literally. The West African proverb about "People who hunt elephants never sleep cold" is not about the benefits of firewood left by elephants that break down trees to feed on the leaves, but about undertaking difficult tasks so as to have many supplementary benefits.

### 3.1.5 *The context of a source text*

The meaning of a text may depend in large measure on some completely different text, often spoken of as a process of intertex-

tuality. For example, *out damned spot* and *to be or not to be* immediately suggest Shakespeare, and *verily, verily* and *hallelujah* sound like the Bible. The writer of the biblical books of First and Second Chronicles obviously depended for much of the content on other Old Testament books, especially First Samuel through Second Kings. What is particularly interesting is the fact that in Second Samuel 24.1 it is the Lord God who urged King David to number the people of Israel, but in 1 Chronicles 21.1 it is Satan who is responsible for this tragedy. Such a difference has important theological significance, especially since the Books of the Chronicles were written after the return from exile in Babylon.

### 3.1.6 *The audience of a discourse as context*

The audience of a discourse also serves as a context to highlight the meaning. For example, the parable of the Father and Two Sons in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, there are two audiences: the repentant outcasts who gladly listened to Jesus and the Pharisees who were suspicious of Jesus and had contempt for the outcasts. The differences in the audience parallel closely the experiences and behavior of the younger and older sons. The parable is really about the goodness of God, which the outcasts accept, and about self-righteousness, that is never reconciled to the God of the New Testament.

### 3.1.7 *Different characters and circumstances in a discourse as contexts for different language registers*

The different registers employed in a discourse, namely, ritual, formal, informal, casual, and intimate, often serve as diagnostic devices to mark different sociological relations between the characters of a novel or degrees of presumed identity between speakers and audiences. Close friends rarely use formal language in speaking to one another, but as a plot develops a change in register between persons can be a highly meaningful device.

In some cases, however, the level of language does not seem to match the vocabulary of the presumed audience. The French newspaper *Le Monde* is generally leftist in its interpretation of the news and would seem therefore to appeal to the less educated seg-

ment of the French proletariat, but the high stylistic level of language in both vocabulary and grammatical structures is decidedly upper class. This disparity shows that in reality the newspaper is directed to intellectuals and not to the average French speaker.

### 3.1.8 *The imprecise content of a text as the context for symbolic language*

The symbolic language of lyric poetry and religious expression seems to be a direct result of the imprecise nature of lyric poetry, and especially so of religious poetry. Note the following brief poem by Emily Dickinson:

My Life Closed Twice
My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see,
If Immortality unveil,
A third event to me.

So huge, so hopeless to conceive,
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

### 3.1.9 *The content of a text as a context for phonetic symbolism*

The phonetic symbolism in words is a powerful device for reinforcing the meaning of a text, and perhaps more than any other poet, Edgar Allan Poe employed phonetic symbolism as a means of establishing a contextual relation between verbal sounds and semantic content. Compare, for example, the third, fourth, and fifth lines in *The Raven*.

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door —
" 'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door —
Only this and nothing more."

And in the first stanza of *The Bells*:

Hear the sledges with the bells —
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens seem to twinkle
with a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells —
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

Or consider the effective use of phonetic symbolism in the first and third sentences of *The Fall of the House of Usher*:

"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher ... I looked upon the scene before me — upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain — upon the bleak walls — upon the vacant eye-like windows — upon the few rank sedges — and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees — with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium — the bitter lapse into everyday life — the hideous dropping off of the veil."

Note the unusually high number of *s*-like sounds and the repeated use of nasal consonants, as well as the frequency of *d* and *r*.

The preceding types of contexts are not exhaustive, but they may serve as some of the more important ways in which a context may lead to certain types of content and reinforce the meaning and form of a text.

### 3.2.1 *The level of vocabulary required for translating texts in B and C languages*

As already noted in Chapter 1, a high percentage of young

people studying to be translators or interpreters have a serious lack of relevant vocabulary in their B and C languages (their primary and secondary foreign languages) and some are inadequate even in their A language (their own mother tongue). As a result, students waste a great deal of time in taking courses in translating and interpreting. In fact, some of the best schools make students pass stiff examinations in such languages before permitting them to study translating, and in some countries translating and interpreting are only graduate courses. Such schools obviously produce much better graduates because they start with more qualified people and therefore do not need to spend a large amount of time in language teaching. Furthermore, programs in translating are not ideal ways to learn a foreign language.

It is, however, impossible to indicate the size of vocabulary that a person needs for translating, because so much depends on the contents of a text and the audience for which a translation is produced. Some people claim that a translator must know a minimum of 50,000 words, but this does not say anything about the active and passive knowledge. The only way to test lexical adequacy is to determine how many times translators need to look up the meanings of words on a typical page of text. If, for example, people have to look up an average of six words per page such persons are clearly not ready to start translating as either free-lance or in-house professionals. Their progress will be so slow that they will never make a living out of their work, and the fact that they must look up so many words means that they are very likely to make serious mistakes in understanding a source text. In order to translate efficiently and accurately translators should not have to look up more than one or two words per page.

Whenever possible a translator should learn to dictate translations that can then be transcribed by a secretary and later reviewed for content and form. By using an oral procedure many translators find that they can proceed more rapidly and often more accurately, since a well-trained translator can usually handle texts with greater stylistic effectiveness in an oral process. Such a procedure, however, also requires considerable practice. But by employing an oral technique some translators can average as many as twenty-five pages of text per day, especially if the contents are somewhat routine, as in the case of stock recommendations or reports to stockholders, but merchandizing texts often require much

greater creativity.

Most professional translators try to specialize in certain types of texts, for example, technology, law, merchandising, drama, novels, and history, and they do not hesitate to tell agencies or their employers the subject matter in which they are the more skilled. If an agency offers a text to a translator that is not within his or her area of special competence, the translator should explain that he or she is not fully competent in such a genre, but that a particular friend or colleague could no doubt handle such a text efficiently.

In general, people working in multilingual communication tend to be either translators or interpreters, but some translators find that it is beneficial to also do some interpreting, since it provides excellent opportunities to keep abreast of new developments in specialized fields. And likewise interpreters often benefit greatly from translating since the precision that is required sharpens their interpreting skills.

### 3.2.2 *Expanding a translator's vocabulary*

Since over 95% of most people's verbal inventory of their mother tongue is learned from syntagmatic contexts, that is, from hearing or seeing words in actual texts, students should follow essentially this same approach for vocabulary enrichment by learning the meanings of words through relevant contexts.

Most good writers provide meaningful contexts for the comprehension and use of unusual terms that they need to employ, whether in technical or literary texts. Carl Sagan's book entitled *Cosmos* (1980) is an excellent source of information about semi-technical vocabulary. A *light-year* is described as the distance light travels in a year, going at the rate of approximately 300,000 kilometers a second, and a *galaxy* is described as composed of gas and dust and stars — billions upon billions of stars, and at least some hundred billion galaxies, each with an average of a hundred billion stars.

On page 24 *organic molecules* are described as "complex microscopic architectures in which the carbon atom plays a central role," and the rest of the page describes how these molecules became the origin and evolution of life. Such information is much more relevant than looking up the words *organic* and *molecules* in a dictionary.

The expression *artificial selection* (p. 26) is carefully explained and described as the manner in which people have domesticated plants and animals by controlling their breeding. This process is then contrasted with *natural selection* , the process that has occurred in nature and has formed the basis for the theory of evolution.

On page 31 deoxyribonucleic acid, DNA, is briefly described as the "master molecule of life on Earth," and this is then set in a context of biological mutation. Human DNA is discussed later as "a ladder a billion nucleotides long." And then, after indicating that most of the possible combinations of nucleotides perform no useful function, the text indicates that "only an extremely limited number of nucleic acid molecules are any good for life-forms as complicated as we." Even so, the number of useful ways of putting nucleic acids together is stupefyingly large ... probably far greater than the total number of electrons and protons in the universe.

*Chloroplasts* are also described on the same page as "tiny molecular factories ... in charge of photosynthesis — the conversion of sunlight, water and carbon dioxide into carbohydrates and oxygen." This is precisely the kind of information that most people need to know, in contrast with the Random House Collegiate Dictionary that describes *chloroplasts* simply as "a plastid containing chlorophyll," and then describes chlorophyll as being of two types, listed with their complex chemical formulas. A well written text is normally far better than a dictionary for learning the meanings of words because a text is usually designed to help people understand words in relevant contexts.

*Viroids* are discussed (p. 39) as "the smallest living things ... composed of less than 10,000 atoms. They cause several different diseases in cultivated plants and have probably most recently evolved from more complex organisms rather than from simpler ones." The text then follows with a description of *viruses* and the smallest known free-living organisms, the pleuropneumonia-like organisms (PPLO).

For persons who wish to expand their passive vocabulary, it is advisable to begin with texts involving subject matter with which the reader is well acquainted or in which he or she has great interest. In this way, the reader can constantly provide contextual information in which such words fit. Technical texts are likely to have more unknown words, unless a reader is particularly well in-

formed about some technical subject

It may also be useful to refine one's knowledge of lexical meaning by making diagrammatic charts about occupational domains, for example, music, in terms of various instruments (cornet, French horn, oboe, violin, cello, bass viol, harp, drums), musicians (players, composers, mixers, singers, conductors), types of music (classical, rock, the blues, gospel, jazz), and locations of performance (nightclubs, concert halls, auditoriums, festivals).

Another important technique for rapid expansion of a particular segment of a lexical inventory is to assemble a number of words belonging to a particular semantic domain, for example, verbal communication, which may contain a number of sub-domains: (1) types of discourse: *report*, *narration*, *summary*, *speech*, *lecture*, *article*, *letter*, *joke*, etc., (2) voice quality: *yell*, *shout*, *grumble*, *whisper*, *sing*, *murmur*, *hum*, etc.; (3) orthography: *alphabetic*, *syllabic*, *ideographic*, etc.; (4) publication units: *book*, *brochure*, *magazine*, *newspaper*, *leaflet*, etc.; (5) relations between participants in communication: *converse*, *argue*, *debate*, *entreat*, *pray*, *answer*, *interrogate*, *apologize*.

One important means of testing proficiency in a foreign language and in expanding a verbal inventory is to write an article in the language and have a mother-tongue speaker go over it for lexical appropriateness, grammatical correctness and style. Such written material should not contain grammatical errors, but the choice of words may be inappropriate to the context and the style is likely to be bookish, rather than natural. Having one's compositions carefully scrutinized and corrected by competent users of a foreign language can be a tremendous advantage. One American teacher with advanced degrees in Spanish from an American and a Mexican university and with more than twenty-five years of experience in Latin America never sends off an important letter or article in Spanish unless it has first been checked by a Spanish speaker. He has never stopped learning Spanish.

Even though a translator may be able to find a rare term in a dictionary, this does not mean that he or she is likely to discover the correct meaning for a particular context, because no dictionary ever contains all the range of usage or defines meaning in completely precise ways. Most competent translators, however, seldom use bilingual dictionaries, since monolingual ones are so much more likely to provide more satisfactory contexts and define

meanings in more precise and helpful ways.

When people try to expand their vocabulary rapidly by reading texts in a B or C language, they often depend too much on a dictionary to give them the meanings of unknown words. They should actually try to determine the meanings of words from the contexts, as may be illustrated by the following paragraph from page 76 of the French novel *Je vous écris d'Italie ... "I Write to you from Italy"* by Michel Déon (Gallimard, 1984). The words in italics are those that the reader did not at first recognize, but which he tried to understand by taking the total context into consideration.

"Beatrice *se cala* dans son siège et eut un geste que Jacques n'attendait pas d'elle: après avoir délacé ses *espadrilles*, elle posa ses pieds nus sur *le tableau de bord*. Le ruban qui enlaçait la *cheville* avait laissé une marque plus claire sur la peau *mate* bien qu'elle eût passé la journée à l'ombre de la tonnelle, à l'ombre de son chapeau de paille qu'elle tenait maintenant *serré* contra sa poitrine, jouant avec les primevères *décousues* par Diva. L'attitude *désinvolte*, inattendue de Beatrice troubla tant Jacques que, *obsédé* par ces pieds nus dont les doigts s'agitaient avec *drôlerie* comme s'ils pianotaient, il pris mal un virage et une deuxiéme fois manqua de verser dans le fossé."

To understand this paragraph it is first essential to know something about what has preceded. The text tells about an attractive woman with dark skin, named Beatrice, who was responsible for the historical documents and art collection in the Italian town of Varela, and about Jacques, a doctoral candidate who was studying the documents in order to reconstruct the life and history of this 16$^{th}$ Century town. The two had just completed a visit to a farm and were on their way back to Varela on a hot summer afternoon in Jacques' small car. But instead of looking up the underlined words in a dictionary, the reader tried to discover the meaning of the words by considering their contexts, consisting of the immediately surrounding words and of the entire preceding part of the novel.

The verb *se caler* in combination with *son siège* "her seat" suggests "fitting comfortably into her seat" or even "nudging herself into her seat," since the small size of the car has been mentioned earlier in the novel. The rest of the sentence can be rendered as "did something that Jacques had not expected her to do." The French word *geste* is often translated as "gesture," but here the

reference is clearly to an action that is not a mere gesture, but a particular act or deed that has special meaning for Jacques — a frequent use of *geste*.

The context about the summer being hot, the trip being made to a farm in the country, and the footwear being untied provides enough context to suggest that the *espadrilles* were probably a kind of "sandals," especially when the following clause indicates that her feet were bare and that she propped them up on the *le tableau de bord*, which could only refer to the dashboard.

The *cheville*, where the ribbon was tied, would no doubt be her "ankle," and the clear mark on her *mate* ("dark") skin would be known from previous contexts, but in view of the ribbon the color would no doubt be even lighter than the skin exposed to the sun. The straw hat had to be held tight (*serré*) against her bosom or it would have blown away.

Beatrice continued to play with the primrose bouquet that had been "messed up" (literally, "unsewn") by Diva, the cat (a fact also known from a preceding context).

The attitude that was unexpected of Beatrice and that troubled Jacques must have been either extremely casual or relaxed (*désinvolte*), because putting feet up on a dashboard and giving the impression of playing a piano with the toes is certainly not normal behavior.

Since the behavior of Beatrice caused Jacques to almost drive into a deep hole, the term *obsédé* must imply a serious effect, for which the English term "obsessed" (a cognate word) would be an appropriate equivalent. The term *drôlerie* looks like the English word *droll*, that often refers to something that is funny in an odd way, in which case the English and French cognates match.

As the result of using several different contexts to determine the meaning or meanings of the underlined words, it is possible to have a correct understanding of the complete text without having to look up all the doubtful or strange terms. A reader can become more and more efficient in deducing the meaning from contexts and at the same time the meanings of the words are much more likely to be remembered in their appropriate contexts. Furthermore, the portion of the text understood by this technique becomes an additional part of the context which in turn can assist in clarifying further unknown terms.

A specialist in teaching English to foreigners always insists that people should dispense with a dictionary if they can follow a

text enough to make sense of what is happening. In this way, a person is much more inclined to keep on reading, because nothing is so fatal to a story than having to keep looking up five or six words for every page. As a person reads more and more, the vocabulary makes more and more sense, and reading becomes a substitute for the constant hearing of a foreign language in realistic contexts.

The following Spanish text is from the first part of Miguel de Unamuno's philosopical novel *Niebla* "The Cloud" (Obras Selectas, pp. 849 – 992, Madrid, Editorial Plenitud) As can be clearly noted, the vocabulary is much more diverse and the grammatical structures considerable more complex than in the case of the French text, but nevertheless, the contexts serve to make the meaning relatively clear. And as in the case of the French text, only underlined words are discussed.

Porque Augusto no era un *caminante*, sino un *paseante* de la vida. "Esperaré a que pase un perro — se dijo — y tomaré la dirección inicial que él tome."

En esto pasó por la calle no un perro, sino una *garrida* moza, y tras de sus ojos se fue, como *imantado* y sin darse de ello cuenta, Augusto.

Y asi una calle y otra y otra.

"Pero aquel chiquillo — iba diciendose Augusto, que más bien que pensaba hablaba consigo mismo ... ¿qué hará allí, tirado de bruces en el suelo? ¡Contemplar a alguna hormiga, de seguro! ¡La hormiga, ¡bah! uno de los animales más hipócritas! Apenas hace sino pasearse y hacernos creer que trabaja. Es como ese *gandul* que va ahí, a paso de carga, codeando a todos aquellos con quienes se cruza, y no me cabe duda de que no tiene nada que hacer! Qué ha de tener que hacer, hombre, qué ha de tener que hacer! Es un vago, un vago como ... ¡ No, yo no soy un vago! Mi imaginación no descansa. Los vagos son ellos, los que dicen que trabajan y no hacen sino *aturdirse* y *ahogar* el pensamiento. Porque, vamos a ver, ese *mamarracho* de chocolatero que se pone ahí, detras de ese vidriera, a darle al rollo majadero, para que le veamos, ese exhibicionista del trabajo, ¿qué es sino un vago? Y a nosotros ¿qué nos importa que trabaje o no? ¡ El trabajo! ¡ El trabajo! ¡ Hipocresía! Para trabajo el de ese pobre paralítico que va ahí medio *arrastrándose* ... Pero ¿y qué sé yo? ¡Perdone, hermano! — esto se lo dijo en voz alta .... ¿ Hermano? ¿Hermano en qué? ? En parálisis! Dicen que todos somos hijos de Adán. Y éste, Juan-

quinito, ¡es también hijo de Adán? ¡Adiós, Juanquín! ¡Vaya, ya tenemos el inevitable automóvil, ruido y polvo! ¿Y qué se adelanta con suprimir así distancias? La manía de viajar viene de *topofobía* y no de *filotopía*, el que viaja mucho va huyendo de cada lugar que deja y no buscando cada lugar a que llega. Viajar ... viajar ... Qué *chisme* más molesto es el paraguas ... Calla, ¿qué es esto?"

Y se detuvo a la puerta de una casa donde había entrado la *garrida* moza que le llevara *imantado* tras de sus ojos ...

Although the terms *caminante* and *paseante* are often translated into English by the same term, Unamuno clearly wanted to emphasize the difference between *caminante*, suggesting vehicular, fast travel, and *paseante*, suggesting walking and slower movement, as well as concern for life's meaning, as indicated in the context.

The term *garrida* is relatively rare, but in combination with *moza* "maid," it must refer to attractive appearance, for she is the person whom Augusto follows for several blocks, as though magnetized (*imantado*, derived from *iman* a substance that magnetizes iron).

The meaning of *gandul*, often used in the sense of lazy loafer, is almost defined by the following phrases that speak of such a person as a vago elbowing (*codeando*) everyone and actually having nothing to do. In fact, such people are stunned, bewildered (*aturdirse*) and smothered, choked (*ahogar*), while Augusto's imagination never rests.

The term *mamarrachos* is rare (it is not even cited in the lexicon of María Moliner) but its meaning is made clear by the statement about such a person being an exhibitionist, not a worker. He likes to show off by being in the front window of a chocolate shop with a rolling pin to roll out candy. By way of contrast the text speaks of a poor paralytic who must drag himself along (*arrastrándose*).

Two words in this text were evidently made up by Unomuno, famous as a professor of Greek and philosophy. The term *topofobía*, which is explained in the following clause as "fleeing from each place" (*huyendo de cada lugar*) and *filotopía*, as "concern for each place to which one arrives" (*cada lugar a que llega*).

Finally, the text returns to the umbrella as the most troublesome gadget (*chisme*) of all, and the first sentence of the next paragraph repeats the reference to the attractive maid (*la garrida*

*moza*) and the magnetic attraction (*imantado*).

Although many authors attempt to suggest the meaning of rare words by placing relevant terms in a context that precedes an unusual and crucial expression, Unomuno uses almost exactly the opposite technique, namely, the rare expression is later defined or explained by the following context (the same order is used in a good deal of scientific writing). This means that language learners who think they must constantly look up in order every unknown term in a dictionary are largely wasting time and depriving themselves of the opportunity to learn the meanings of words by means of contexts.

Rapid acquisition of the basic vocabulary of any language can be acquired by concentrating on the syntagmatic contexts, whether oral or written, but narrative texts are much more likely to have fewer highly specific meanings and the relations between sentences are likely to express more evident relations of cause-effect ("and so"), purpose ("in order to"), condition ("if ... then"), concession ("although ... nevertheless"), temporal sequence ("and then"), while essays that occur in the editorial sections of newspapers are usually more difficult to follow. For example, in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, p. 7, March 22, 2000 there is an interesting article about the issue of increasingly inadequate supplies of water throughout the world.

As in the case of the French and Spanish texts, a student with a practical use of conversational German for traveling in Germany was asked to mark the number of words that were either unknown or dubiously recognized. The total number of such words was 32, a proportion that is entirely too high for about 180 words of a text. In fact, the student indicated clearly that he was not able to read a newspaper in German. This means that the technique recommended for the texts in French and Spanish could not be applied to this German text because the proportion of known words was too limited to apply to this newspaper essay. In such circumstances it is necessary to use a dictionary, but in a highly selective manner.

First it is important to obtain a standard bilingual dictionary with both definitions as well as glosses. A person should then write in the margins (or in brackets in the case of an electronic text) the presumably correct interpretation of the specific words, but the entire text together with the necessary notations about meanings should be reviewed carefully each day for at least three

or four days so as to help a person remember the previously unknown words. But these meanings must always be reviewed in terms of the meaning of each relevant context so as to benefit from the syntagmatic reinforcement of meaning.

The review of this same Frankfurter Allgemeine text by another person indicated nine terms for which the meaning was unknown or doubtful, but for which the context seemed to provide adequate contextual assistance. These words are italicized and numbered within square brackets and are discussed in a following section.

Der Wert des Wassers

Das zweite Weltwasserforum in Den Haag

Die Bewohner vieler westlicher Länder leben so, als stünde ihnen eine unendliche Menge Wasser zur [1] *Verfügung*. In der Dritten Welt hingegen haben derzeit eine Milliarde Menschen keinen Zugang zu sauberem Trinkwasser, und drei Milliarden müssen ohne ausreichende sanitäre Einrichtungen leben. [2] *Wasserknappheit* herrscht in 26 Ländern, nach Schätzungen könnten es im Jahr 2050 schon 66 Staaten sein. Die Weltwasserkommission, eine Gruppe von bekannten Politikern und [3] *Fachleuten* unter der Leitung des stellvertretenden Weldbank-Präsidenten Serageldin, spricht deshalb auch schon von einer weltweiten "Wasserkrise." Wachse die Weltbevolkerung in den nächsten fünfundzwanzig Jahren um zwei Milliarden, dann benötige man siebzehn Prozent mehr Wasser zur [4] *Bewässerung* in der Landwirtschaft, zwanzig Prozent mehr für die Industrie und siebzig Prozent mehr in den Haushalten, rechnet die Kommission vor. Das seien noch [5] *zurückhaltende* Schätzungen, heisst es in ihren jünsten Bericht. Hinzu kommt, dass viele Gewässer heute schon unbrauchbar sind, weil sie von Industrie und Landwirtschaft verschmutzt wurden.

[6] *Angesichts* solcher Prognosen erscheint es verwunderlich, dass die internationale Politik sich erst [7] *allmählich* für das Thema zu interessieren beginnt. Wärend über andere globale [8] *Umweltbelange* schon seit längerem Diskutiert wird, war Wasser bislang meist nur ein Teilaspekt. Das zweite Welt-wasserforum, das seit Freitag in Den Haag stattfindet, soll diesen [9] *Missstand* beseitigen. Mehr als 3500 Teilnehmer, 158 Delegationen und 155 Minister aus aller Welt, trafen in der niederländischen Haupstadt zusammen, um über Möglichkeiten eines besseren Wassermanagements zu beraten.

1. *Verfügung* in this context that speaks of an "endless supply of water" must suggest availability, for example "at their disposal" or "for their use," in which case the entire first sentence of the text may be rendered as "The inhabitants of many western countries live as though they had an endless supply of water at their disposal."
2. Even though a person may not recognize the meaning of *knapp* in the compound *Wasserknappheit* as referring to something "scarce" or "barely sufficient," the contrast between the first and the second sentence and the fact that the third sentence verifies the second, the term *Wasserknappheit* must refer to insufficient supplies of water. In fact, the term *knapp* may reflect a measure of phonetic symbolism.
3. The commission for water throughout the world is described as consisting of a group of political leaders and *Fachleute*, who must be the experts, as in the case of any important international convention — never representatives of the well informed public. Furthermore, the component *-leute* is a common term for people and *Fach* is often used for a specialty or profession.
4. *Bewässerung* is simply a nominal derivative of the verb bewässern referring to the use of water (*Wasser*) for some purpose, for example, irrigation, as in this context. Some people may be misled by the umlaut *ä* in the verb construction.
5. The participial form *zurückhaltende*, based on the corresponding verb meaning "to hold back" or "to withhold" relates to the evaluations (*Schätzungen*), mentioned in the most recent notice, namely, that much of the available water is unusable as the result of contamination by industry and agriculture.
6. The preposition *angesichts*, containing the noun *Gesicht* "face," is a common means of saying, "in view of" or "as the result of," referring in this context to the prognoses already mentioned in the first paragraph. In a number of languages such linking words seem difficulty to remember since they occur in so many different contexts and the referents are not so picturable.
7. The adverb *allmählich* refers to "slow, steady progress," but such a beginning of interest was obviously rather slow because of the apparent abundance of water. Perhaps this is, however, a case of wishful thinking, because the history of concern for water would seem to be better characterized by the phrase *am Ende* "at last."
8. The *Umweltbelange*, a compound combining a well-known

term *Umwelt* "environment" and *Belange* "the important aspects," of which water was previously only one aspect or part (*Teilaspekt*) of the environment.
9. The word *Missstand* looks like a typographical error, but it is derived from *Miss* "bad, wrong" and *Stand* "position," or in this context even "point of view" is "set aside" (*beseitigen*).

As should be quite evident from the above analyses of various German words and their relation to contexts, some of the difficulties experienced by English speakers occur because they are unaccustomed to the writing of semantically and grammatically complex compounds. The umlauting of certain vowels, especially in combination with suffixes containing a high front vowel such as *i*, is also confusing, although the rules for such umlauting should have been readily noted at a much earlier stage in learning German.

*Chapter 4*

# *Relations between Words*

Professional translators are usually so concerned with the meaning of a text that they seldom give much thought to the grammatical structures of source or receptor languages, because their task is to understand texts, not to analyze them. If, as already mentioned, translators thoroughly understand a source text, they do not need to worry about whether to use nouns, verbs, and adjectives in a particular order so as to represent the meaning. These decisions are made almost automatically.

Similarly, when people wish to express some complex concept in their own mother tongue, their brains quickly and in a largely automatic manner sort out the appropriate kinds of words and arrange them in effective combinations. If a translator adequately controls both source and receptor languages, translating is essentially no different from writing.

As the result of inadequacies in their B and C languages, students of translation must struggle to find the right words and to arrange them appropriately. As a result, their translations frequently seem unnatural, awkward, or even misleading. Such difficulties often result from misleading grammatical terminology and from grammatical systems that are largely unrelated to meaningful relations between words.

## 4.1 *Misleading grammatical terminology*

Traditional grammatical terminology is often more confusing than helpful. For example, the so-called possessive construction in English seldom refers to actual possession. Even in the case of *his car* the bank may own more of the car than the one who is said to possess it. Essentially the same problem exists in the phrase *his house*, because the phrase may refer to any place that a person regularly lives, whether owned or not and whether an apartment, a townhouse, or a duplex. The meaningful relations are even more complex in the case of *his leg*, which, though seemingly possessed, is actually a part of the person and not something that is regularly bought or sold.

The phrase *his father* involves a biological relation of direct descent of one generation, and if anyone metaphorically possesses the other, then it would be the father who possesses the son. But the phrase *his wife* suggests quite a different relationship, especially in a monogamist society in which women have full legal rights. Any person who does not distinguish clearly the different sociological relations between the components of *his car* and *his wife* will soon be on the way to the divorce court.

The relation between a so-called possessive pronoun or noun and the following noun may be one of participation in an activity. For example, *his work* is normally a reference to the fact that "1 does 2," whereas the phrase *his punishment* means that "some one does 2 to 1." Many expressions imply an unmentioned activity, for example, *his boss*, in which "2 controls the activity of 1" or *his partner* in which "1 and 2 are related in some joint activity."

In fact, speakers of some languages refuse to translate literally a phrase such as *his God*, because they insist that no one can own God, although they can "worship God" or "trust God." Some relations, however, are unusually complex. For example, in the case of *his heir* the relations may need to be explained as "1 has designated 2 as the person to receive something of value after the death of 1."

The phrase *his memory* is ambiguous because it can refer to the contents of the memory or to the faculty of remembering. But in some instances the head word qualifies an action, as in *his folly* "1 does something that proves to have the characteristic of being 2." But in some instances a phrase may be both ambiguous and obscure if the meaning of the head word is ambivalent, for example, *his party*, which may refer to "a political party of which 1 is a member or which 1 controls," but it may also refer to "a social occasion paid for by 1 or arranged by others as a tribute to 1."

But where does the information come from to make such decisions? As in the case of the meanings of words, discussed in Chapter 3, such information can only come from the larger context. This often means that it is impossible to understand a sentence without considering the nearby paragraphs or even an entire text. For example, the phrase *his old servant* is essentially ambiguous because *old* can refer to the age of the person who serves or to the length of time that the person has served, or to both the age and the time of service. The actual meaning within a particular text can only be resolved by knowing the way in which such words oc-

cur in the larger contexts.

In legal texts it is particularly important to recognize inherent ambiguities so as not to translate wrongly or in such a way as to create more problems. For example, the statement *his recent title to the property* may imply that the title was only recently acquired or it may mean that a person had the title to the property up to a recent point of time but no longer. Such ambiguities are the life blood of the legal profession.

Such possessive constructions are, however, only a small part of the semantic problems posed by inadequate terminology used to describe or refer to grammatical relations. For example, grammarians have traditionally treated subject-predicate constructions as meaning "1 does 2 to 3," as in *John hit Bill*, *John heard Bill*. The formula "1 does 2 to 3" is appropriate for *John hit Bill*, but not for *John heard Bill*, because in the latter expression it is Bill who makes a noise that affects John.

But the statement *John knew Bill had left* implies that the statement *Bill had left* is the content of what *John knew*. Similarly the statements *John said Bill had left*, *John saw the bridge give way*, and *John felt the animal tremble* are perhaps best treated by considering the predicates *Bill had left*, *the bridge give way*, and *the animal tremble* as the contents of the preceding verbs. It is then also possible to extend this content relation to include predicate noun phrases, as in *John told the story*, *John heard the report*, *John knows the answer*.

Traditional grammars of English speak of certain verbs as "main verbs" and of others as "complements," in such expressions as *they began to work*, *they stopped digging*, *they continued to explore the cave*, but semantically the verbs *began*, *stopped*, *continued* are really only aspects of the semantically more relevant verbs *work*, *dig*, *explore*. In fact, in many languages aspects of activities are indicated by enclitics or affixes attached to verbs.

## 4.2 *Referential grammatical classes*

Many inexperienced translators think of grammatical classes of words as being nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, etc. And they often assume that in translating faithfully they should match these classes in the receptor language. Accordingly, nouns should be translated by nouns, verbs by verbs, and adjectives by adjectives, but such a procedure

almost invariably leads to unnaturalness and even perversion of meaning in a receptor language. These traditional grammatical classes are based primarily on the forms of words and their distribution in sentences. In fact, much of the grammatical terminology is derived from the way in which ancient rhetoricians described Greek and Latin.

But in order to understand the meaning of grammatical relations, it is more important to consider the referential classes which reflect more closely the semantic functions of the referents: entities (*boy*, *tree*, *house*, *lake*, *sky crowd*), activities/events (*think*, *eat*, *talk*, *walk*, *ride*, *swim*), states (*dead*, *tired*, *sick*, *angry*, *happy*), processes, as changes of state and characteristics (*sicken*, *recover*, *grow*, *widen*, *enlarge*), characteristics of the preceding classes (*tall*, *round*, *slow*, *recent*, *small*, *perhaps*, *good*), and connectors, words that connect words to one another, either coordinately, by means of conjunctives or disjunctives (*and*, *or*, *but*, *except*) and by means of transitionals (*nevertheless*, *moreover*, *accordingly*) or subordinately by means of prepositions (*in*, *around*, *during*, *for*, *by through*, *beyond*) and conjunctions (*because*, *in order to*, *although*, *where*, *when*, *if*).

This focus on the referential classes of words rather than on the formal or distributional features is a great advantage for translators since it forces them to think in terms of what is actually happening in a text. For example, *environmentally damaging waste* and *congressionally guaranteed subsidy* consist formally of an adverb, a participle, and a noun. But the adverbs *environmentally* and *congressionally* actually refer to entities, namely, the *environment* and *congress*. The participles *damaging* and *guaranteed* refer to processes, and *waste* and *subsidy* are entities, but the relations expressed by the two phrases are very different. The phrase *environmentally damaging waste* means that "3 does 2 to 1" while in *congressionally guaranteed subsidy* "1 does 2 to 3."

Analyzing grammatical relations in terms of referential classes is an important tool for unpacking some of the complex combinations of words so that the content may be transferred to a language in which the same content may be expressed by very different grammatical arrangements. Carl Sagan's volume *Cosmos* contains a number of examples of syntactically complex expressions that become much more meaningful when analyzed in terms of referential classes. For example the semantically condensed expression *the revivified thought of ancient Greece* may need to be

unpacked in order to understand what is meant. Merely looking in a dictionary for the word *revivify* is not likely to be of much help. One dictionary, for example, defines *revivify* as "to live again, to give new life to, to reanimate," but that is not the sense used by Sagan, who writes about thinking in essentially the same manner as the early Greek scientists, like Anaximander of Miletus, who invented the sun-dial, Hippocrates, who established the medical tradition, and Democritus, who was the first to talk about atoms. Sagan contrasts this early Greek thought with *theological scholasticism*, the way theologians in Western Europe reasoned during the Middle Ages.

In some cases Sagan uses abstract forms of contrast to express more vividly certain distinctions, as in the statement, *schemes which have been accepted by the credulity and welcomed by the superstition of 70 later generations of men*. In order to understand who is doing what, it may be important to think in terms of referential classes and to determine that the *70 later generations of men* include all those people who have lived on earth since then until now. These are the ones who have stupidly accepted the false schemes of thought because of their own superstitions.

Some statements in *Cosmos* are so semantically condensed that they require considerable expansion if their real meaning is to be accurately reflected. For example, the statement *the evolution of life is a cosmic inevitability* is about the development of living creatures out of inorganic compounds as being something that is bound to happen time after time in the cosmos. Although *cosmic* is an adjective, it refers to the cosmos as an entity, and the noun *inevitability* is actually a reference to an inevitable process. Without restructuring the meaning on the basis of referential classes, the meaning of this important statement can be easily overlooked.

Academic texts often require unpacking if the meaning is to be accurately grasped. On one occasion a group of professional translators were asked to consider the sentence, *The reinforcing impacts of natural resource depletion and human destitution are exemplified by trends in the world's farm lands*. This sentence was the first in an article published by an international agency whose avowed purpose was to provide Third World people with helpful information about agriculture and the environment. But the sentence produced an unexpected reaction among the translators. Those working primarily within Indo-European languages insisted that they could translate the sentence, but they also admitted that

they did not know what it meant. Other translators working partially in non-Indo-European languages insisted that they would have to understand the meaning of the sentence and only then could they rearrange the constituent parts in such a way as to make sense.

In terms of referential classes the article *the* is a characteristic of definiteness; *reinforcing* suggests repeatedness and causation, while *impacts* are states resulting from the process of *depletion* and from the state of *destitution*. The preposition *of* relates the phrases of process and state to the *impacts*.

The phrase *natural resource depletion* refers to the loss of resources existing in nature, and the phrase *human destitution* refers to people being very poor. These two phrases are combined by the coordinate conjunction *and*.

The passive verb phrase *are exemplified by* points to what follows as being examples of what precedes. *Trends* are only a series of events or states that occur repeatedly, but there is no indication as to any quantitative or qualitative variable. The preposition *in* serves to indicate where such events take place, while *the world's* refers to various parts of the world (there is clearly no possession implied). The term *farm* indicates an activity, and *lands* are entities for farming. But even with all this information it is not possible to determine precisely what the meaning is.

For example, are these *impacts* good or bad (from the immediate context, probably bad)? And is the relation between *depletion* and *destitution* simply a matter of repetition, as suggested by the prefix *re-* of *reinforcing* or is it possibly reciprocal? But as in the case of the meaning of words, the clues to meaning depend on the broader context. Only on the third page of the article does the author finally explain that what is happening more and more in farm lands throughout the world shows how the loss of natural resources results in greater poverty for the people and how their poverty in turn results in increased loss of natural resources.

If translators really understand what a text means, they can usually render it in ordinary language, but this may require technical knowledge and sensitivity to the needs of the intended audience. Some knowledge of linguistics may be useful, as described in the next Chapter, but linguistics is not indispensable, any more than it is for people who wish to write down their thoughts. Translators are communicators of texts, not analysts. If a translator fully understands the meaning of a text, the process of trans-

lating it is largely automatic. Expert translators, therefore, let there brains do the work.

But the process of arriving at a fully intelligible understanding of a text may depend not only on the words of an entire text, but also on what the author evidently considered to be the knowledge and concerns of his or her intended audience. Similarly, a translator must ultimately reckon with the presuppositions of those who are supposed to understand a translation. Translators are always juggling several balls at the same time.

The diversity of grammatical constructions and the different ways in which semantic relations between words are expressed often seem bewildering to language learners and even to beginning translators. It may, accordingly, be helpful to shift attention from the details of grammar to some of the basic concepts that can be expressed in all languages, although often in quite different ways.

## 4.3 *Basic meaningful relations between words*

Linguists have described in a number of different ways the diverse semantic relations between words on the grammatical level of structure. A translator, however, is not concerned primarily with the nature of the grammatical system, but with the major ways in which referential classes relate to one another in texts. The majority of meaningful grammatical relations between words may be described as attribution, participation, restriction, content, connection, repetition, proportion, and supplementation, but these same semantic relations are also relevant on the level of discourse.

These eight sets of semantic relations are not exhaustive in the sense of including any and all types of relations, but they do represent a general guide to the major types of meaningful relations, and they highlight the fact that there are conspicuously fewer such sets of relations than many people have imagined. They also have a high probability of being widely applicable, even if not universal, in that translators working in several hundred different languages in various parts of the world have not found grammatical relations that do not reflect, at least broadly, these eight sets of relations, which in the following sections will be illustrated primarily by English.

## 1. Attribution

In English most attributive constructions consist of three components (1) a subject, normally information shared by speaker and audience, (2) a copulative verb, for example, *be*, *become*, *seem*, *appear*, (3) a predicate element indicating state (*they are tired*), class (*she is a doctor*), characteristic (*the shirt appears red*) or identity (*John Thompson is my colleague*). Apposition is also a type of attribution, for example, *my friend*, *Bill Jones* and *valleys in the mountains of the brain*, *convolutions that greatly increase the surface area*.

In a number of languages there is no need for a copulative verb, since the subject and the predicate are linked by juxtaposition, as in Classical Greek and Hungarian. And in some languages, as also in English, there may be an anticipatory pronoun referring to a predicate clause, for example, *it is a shame that he left too early* or a dummy subject, for example, *there was trouble on 47th Street*. In both of these attributive constructions the implied purpose is evidently to treat the entire predicate statement as new information.

## 2. Participation

Participation involves a nuclear activity, process or state, and a number of participating satellites: actors (*John ran back*), causers, those who cause something to happen (*John ran his horse in the second race*), affectees (*the man was shot in the back*), instruments (*the key opened the door* or *they used a key to open the door*), indirect affectees (*Jane was given a new car for Christmas*). These satellites may occur in multiple series and in various positions, for example, *the rioters shot the man and then poured gasoline on the car and set it on fire*.

In many Indo-European languages the semantic relation between a verb and different satellites has been traditionally marked by different suffixed case endings, for example, nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, and vocative, but increasingly these semantic relations are indicated by word order and by prepositions.

## 3. Restriction

The process of restriction involves the addition of words that

semantically restrict the range of reference of some head expression. For example, the term *men* could potentially refer to some 40% of the world's population, but the addition of *old* in *old men* significantly reduces or restricts the range of reference of *men*. The further addition of preposed and postposed terms, as in *the three old men that talked with me yesterday* radically restricts the phrase *old men*.

The process of restriction is one of the most common types of relations between words, for example, *walked fast* (activity and characteristic), *tired worker* (state and entity), *the dish on the table* (entity and location), *if he works, he must be paid* (condition and activity), *probably escaped* (modal and activity), *continued training* (aspect and activity), *those who arrived late* (entities and activity), *came to help her* (activity and purpose), *an attack late at night* (activity and time). Some linguists include all relations of participation as being restrictions.

In many languages expressions indicating restriction show agreement in number and case with the head word.

## 4. Content

Expressions of content occur primarily with verbs of communication, perception, learning, and knowledge: *he said he would return*, *he saw the thief enter by the back window*, *the men felt a strange movement coming up through the basement*, *he learned how to whistle*, *they all knew that they were condemned to death*. These relations of content may also be analyzed as restrictions, but regarding them as various types of content seems not only structurally justified, but such a classification is useful in treating certain parallel verb-object combinations: *told the story*, *explained the joke*, *knew the lesson*, *sensed her agony of spirit*.

## 5. Connection

Connection involves the use of transitionals, conjunctions, and prepositions, in order to link words and groups of words together into larger units.

### A. Transitionals

Transitional expressions such as *nevertheless*, *furthermore*,

*moreover*, *therefore*, *next*, *finally*, *to conclude* are often semantically equivalent to an entire sentence. For example, the transitional *furthermore* suggests "in addition to what has already been said, it is important to consider the following." Even a word such as *next* at the beginning of a sentence calls attention to what has been said, as well as to the following comment. The transitional *finally* also links the preceding with what follows and marks what follows as the end of a series. The relation of transitionals to what precedes and to what follows is essentially coordinate.

## B. Conjunctions

Conjunctions are of two principal types: coordinating and subordinating. The coordinating conjunctions in English are *and* (additive)

*John and Mary*
*rock and roll*
*John was in the basement and Mary was in the kitchen*

*or* (alternative)

*Mary or Jane*
*they will finish the work, or at least they will try to finish*

*but*, *except* (adversative or disjunctive)

*he will try but is unlikely to succeed*
*all but Philip were delighted with the results*

Some coordinating conjunctions occur in couplets: *both ... and*, *either ... or*, *neither ... nor*

Some of the principal subordinating conjunctions in English are *so that*, *in order to*, *if*, *although*, *because*, *when*, *while*, for example,

*he left money so that she could travel*
*they founded a new company in order to expand into a new industry*
*we will do it if you pay the cost*
*although he was sick, he insisted on continuing the journey*
*no one was drunk when we were there*

The clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions are all restrictive.

## C. Prepositions

Prepositions not only connect sets of words to one another,

but they also indicate a wide range of associated meanings: time (*the noise during the night*), space (*the ball under the couch*), agency (*given by a wealthy donor*), cause (*a flood because of spring rains*), extension (*a journey through Egypt*), purpose (*money for a new car*). All of these types of prepositional phrases are restrictive.

## 6. Repetition

Repetition generally implies emphasis and in English it may be complete or partial:

*Yes! Yes!*
*I like it, I like it*
*Jane did not go yesterday, she went today.*
*She wrote the entire poem, not just a part.*

In Bahasa Indonesia, however, the repetition of a word normally indicates plurality, but it is written as a numeral 2 at the end of a word.

## 7. Proportion

Expressions of proportion are quite common in all languages, but the structure of such expressions is often quite different. Many depend on contrastive comparative degrees in positive-negative statements. In English comparison is indicated by two related statements of comparative degree, for example, *the more, the better* and *the more he talks the less I believe him*. In some languages, however, comparison consists of a negative-positive set, for example, *John is not friendly*, Jim is friendly, meaning John is more friendly than Jim.

## 8. Supplementation

Nonrestrictive pronominal clauses and parenthetical additions are typical ways in which supplementary information may be added to a text without its being structurally related, although it is semantically related. Such expressions are usually set off by punctuation marks in writing and by pause-pitches in pronunciation, for example,

*My friend, who hated to sail, nevertheless agreed to go with us through the Caribbean.*

*Social relations between ethnic groups (this is particularly true of minorities in Europe) are exceptionally complex.*

In general the greater the amount of formal marking of grammatical relations for such features as case, gender, number, and dependency, the freer the word order, and conversely the fewer the formal indicators of grammatical relations, the more rigid is the word order, since so much depends on varying types of word order and juxtaposition.

These eight major types of relations between words are, however, of limited application without considering some of the specific ways in which a translator can analyze some of the intricately organized phrases in a language such as English, in which the limited grammatical marking provides a basis for considerable obscurity and ambiguity. Some of these relations can perhaps be best understood by examining some of the most common structures, for example, noun-noun, adjective-noun, and adverbial phrases.

## Noun-noun phrases

Some noun-noun phrases are both long and referentially complex, especially if the nouns are nominalized verbs, as in the phrase *acid precipitation assessment program*, in which the terms *precipitation*, *assessment*, and *program* refer to activities and not to entities. The referential class of *program* is a series of activities, the purpose of which is to assess or evaluate how *acid* (a mass entity) is *precipitated*.

Some semantically complex noun phrases may include an adjective, which may actually refer to an entity, for example, *United States coronary heart disease deaths*. The *United States* is a collective entity, and although *coronary* is formally an adjective, it refers to entities, namely, the arteries in the heart. The term *disease* is a state, and in this context *deaths* is a process. An unpacked restatement of this phrase can be formulated as "deaths of people in the United States caused by disease affecting the arteries of the heart."

In some phrases the same term may occur in quite different combinations, for example, *influenza virus*, *influenza vaccine*, *influenza infection*. The phrase *influenza virus* refers to the *virus* that causes the state of *influenza*, but in the case of *influenza vac-*

cine it is the *vaccine* that prevents *influenza*, while in *influenza infection* the *influenza* is the *infection*.

A seemingly very simple phrase may, however, be completely ambiguous. For example, *fluid transport* may refer to ways in which a *fluid* can be moved from one place to another, for example, by rail, boat, or pipe, but the phrase can also refer to the *transport* of objects by means of a *fluid*, for example, floating logs down a river or piping coal particles mixed with water.

Some noun-noun phrases appear to be descriptions of entities when in reality they are names of a particular type of entity. For example, *mountain laurels*, the name of a medium sized bush growing in the eastern part of North America and in Cuba, is neither a *laurel* nor is it restricted to *mountains*.

The phrases *forest grasses* (grasses that typically grow in forests) and *crown fires* (fires that burn in the crowns of trees) represent a relation of "1 is the place of 2," but in *battle site*, *customs house* "2 is the place of 1."

Compare also *astronomy satellite* and *tennis racket*, in which "2 is an instrument for doing 1," but in *microscope observations* and *X-ray telescopy* "1 is an instrument for doing 2." Similarly, in *mercury concentrations* and *kidney disorders* "2 is the state of 1" while in *low-density fires* and *mass production* "1 is the state of 2."

For translators trying to understand a source text the real issue is the source of information to provide an understanding of what is involved. Professional translators almost immediately sense the semantic relation in terms of their own background experience, but beginning translators must look to wider encyclopedic sources in order to comprehend the necessary background data.

But as already indicated in Chapter 1 a high percentage of those who produce texts to be made available on political and economic issues for the European Community do not themselves understand the meanings of the documents that they themselves produce. When questioned about the meaning of certain sentences or paragraphs, the common response is "You do not need to know what the text means, just translate it."

In many instances such texts are simply compilations of existing documents in which the meaningful relations between the sections are both obscure and misleading. But this is precisely what translators constantly face, even in the case of texts produced by

scientists. One large scientific company found that they had to provide courses for their scientists on how to write accurately and clearly.

## Adjective-noun phrases

In some scientific texts adjectives may be semantically very complex. For example, the phrase *paleontological surprise* occurred in a text referring to the surprise experienced by persons who had found fossils associated with a particular paleontological stratum. But the problems of ambiguity are more difficult to handle without special attention being paid to the wider context. For example, *stellar knowledge* may refer to remarkable knowledge or to knowledge about the stars, in which case, only the wider context can resolve the ambiguity. But in other instances an adjective may represent a subtle and purposeful oxymoron, as in *patterned chaos*, which is technically a contradiction.

Although some persons assume that the term *kind* in the phrase *kind person* is simply a quality or characteristic of an individual, it is usually a reference to the manner in which a person relates to other people by being kind to them, and in many languages such behavior must be expressed by a verb phrase, for example, "by helping others."

Since adjectives so frequently indicate an essential quality of the following head word, it may be difficult for some persons to realize that often the adjective actually refers to entities, for example, *human needs* are the needs that humans experience, and *ecological shock* refers to what happens to the ecology. In many instances, however, the attributive adjective may refer to the means of doing something, for example, *mathematical analysis* and *chemical treatment*.

In some texts an adjective may refer to entities that engage in certain activities, for example, *interdisciplinary competition* is a reference to the way in which people in different disciplines compete, but in many cases an adjective refers to particular kinds of entities that experience the result of activities contained in the adjectives, for example, *herbivorous dinosaurs* "entities that eat only plants" and *carnivorous animals* "entities that eat only meat."

Literal translations of some adjective-noun phrases can be laughably wrong, for example, *molecular biologists* and *atomic physicists*. The biologists are not molecules nor are the physicists

atoms, but in each case "2 studies or works with 1."

## Unusual roles of adverbs

Translators from English into other languages are so accustomed to adverbs qualifying events and characteristics, that they sometimes overlook other special relations, as in *intellectually advanced teenagers* meaning "3 is 2 with respect to 1," in other words, "teenagers who are ahead of other young people with respect to intellectual abilities." But the phrase *biologically aggressive role* refers to "activity that proves harmful to other biological species." This phrase summarized the activity of a particular species of birds that greatly diminished the population of another competing species.

Many adverbs qualify complete sentences, for example, *unfortunately, he bled to death* and *paradoxically, such double bonds of fatty acid prove to be less susceptible to oxidation*. In both instances, the initial adverb indicates the nature of the following event. And in many languages it is essential to use a different means of referring to such complete utterances, for example, *he bled to death, this was unfortunate* or *such double bonds of fatty acid prove to be less susceptible to oxidation — something quite contrary to normal expectation*.

Translators do not need to become linguists in order to become first-rate translators, although some study of linguistics can certainly be helpful. But translators must be sensitive to the broader contexts in which words may combine into more and more intricately related sets of grammatical relations. The answer to most problems of meaning come from extended contexts, whether within the text in question or in other texts produced by the same writer or in texts produced by other writers on the same subject, for example, articles in encyclopedias. In the same way that most problems of word meaning depend on the meanings of related words, the meaning of particular grammatical constructions depend on the meaning of related grammatical constructions in other or similar contexts.

*Chapter 5*

# Translating Texts

Many people have the impression that words are marked by spaces, that grammar is limited by periods, and that discourse refers to the contents of paragraphs. But lexical units may involve entire phrases, for example, *a first-come-first-served arrangement*. Grammars include pronouns that refer backward or forward across sentence boundaries, and discourses may consist of a single word such as *Damn*! or they may even extend to a set of books, for example, the four volumes by Max Gallo on the life of Napoleon. Overlapping the boundaries of words, grammar, and discourse is the name of the game, but the focus of attention for a translator is texts because these are the basic and ultimate units that carry meaning.

Many translators, however, regard features of discourse as being irrelevant to their task as translators, because they think that all they must do is to reproduce the sentences more or less word for word and any problems of the discourse will be automatically accounted for. But this is not the way accurate translating is done. For example, a literal translation of the proverb, "They locked the barn door after the horse had been stolen" would be meaningless in most of the local languages in the equatorial band across Africa. Few people have horses, barns, or locks, but they do have a more clever and sophisticated proverb referring to the chief's son, "They built a bridge over the stream after the chief's son fell in the water."

Some books on translation, however, give the impression that translating means translating languages, rather than texts. They describe the meanings of different semantic domains, list the corresponding grammatical structures, and analyze the distinctive stylistic devices in the respective languages, but this is essentially the linguists task who analyzes a language from the outside, while a translator needs an insider's view that cuts through the formal differences and deals directly with the meaning of a text to be translated. The foreign words are transformed into concepts, and these concepts become the basis for a translator's producing essentially the same meaning in another language.

Frequently there is a serious error in a text submitted for translation. In a recent report prepared in English by a commission investigating the possibility of Rumania entering the European Union, there was a reference to a document, presumably prepared by the Rumanian government, in which Rumanian officials were demanding certain reforms in the European Union. The translator of the English document into French readily sensed the inconsistency in the wording. Instead of demanding changes in the European Union, the original document listed changes that the Rumanian government was ready to make in order to become a member of the Union. Accordingly, after discovering what was undoubtedly the real meaning of the document, he adjusted his translation to represent correctly the intent and purpose that lay behind the garbled English text.

Some translators, however, insist that correcting errors is not their business, because their task is to translate what a document says. They insist that if a text is poorly written, they should simply reflect the poor style of the original. Most professional translators, however, either correct obvious mistakes or at least call attention to such matters in a note directed to those responsible for having the translation made.

Most expert translators actually improve the style and organization of a discourse in the process of translating, because they are almost always more proficient in stylistic matters than are the original writers of the documents submitted for translation. For example, when executives in the translation program of the European Union have occasion to compare the same document in various languages, they often find that in one language the form of the document is conspicuously inferior to what it is in the other languages. In such circumstances, the stylistically inferior document is almost always the original.

Mistakes in translation can be readily made if a translator has not read an entire text before undertaking to translate a part. A translation into English of an important lecture in French ended a series of comments on one subject with the statement that the subject deserves further "study and consultation," which the translator assumed referred to the next page. Accordingly, he translated, "as may be noted in what follows." But the translator had obviously not read the next page, which dealt with an entirely different subject.

Unfortunately, many translators are not fully aware of the

extent to which well written texts reflect important structural features. The following first paragraph of an article in the Wall Street Journal about *kreteks* in Indonesia illustrates some of the complexity and intricacies of discourse structure:

Kreteks Are Big Business

> The kretek is the incense of Indonesia. It is the fragrant haze that chokes visitors as soon as they step off a plane. It is the gray cloud that seems to resonate from the gongs of Javanese gamelan orchestras. It is the strong, aromatic smoke that fills the lungs of cabinet minister and taxi driver alike. It is the spicy fog that blurs the edges of Indonesia.

Although the exnlanation about the nature of kreteks (cigarettes made with local tobacco and tiny pieces of hot-burning cloves) is left for the following page, the headline about "big business" will immediate catch the attention of the readers of the Wall Street Journal, and perhaps even more so because they do not know what kreteks are.

The four major sentences are organized in accordance with the temporal sequence in which a person is likely to visit Indonesia: first arriving and being choked by the fragrant haze, then hearing the percussion orchestra that always meets international flights, later noticing the smoke that fills the lungs of everyone, and finally seeing the spicy fog on the edges of Indonesia as his plane flies away.

In addition to the temporal sequence there is also the spatial sequence of the plane, the terminal, the streets, and the edges of Indonesia. The repetition of certain related semantic classes, for example, the series of atmospheric terms: *haze*, *cloud*, *smoke*, *fog*, as well as the distinct odors: *incense*, *fragrant*, *aromatic*, *spicy*, emphasize the unity of the text.

The parallelism of the four sentences beginning with *it is* may seem to some readers as being overdone, but the clever unity of this paragraph, marked by the word *Indonesia* at the end of the first sentence and again at the end of the paragraph highlights the unity of the paragraph. The more readily translators sense the organizational elements of a text, the more relevantly these features can be evaluated and incorporated into a translation.

## 5.1 *Major organizational features of texts*

The major organizational features of most texts include time, space, class, connectivity, gradation, dialogue, and literary formulas, constructed out of frequently recurring formal structures. The rapid recognition of such features and their roles in discourses can be a distinct help to translators. who may find that what is excellent for one language-culture does not fit easily into the patterns of other language-cultures. For example, many traditional novels and short-stories in Chinese have unhappy endings, and some publishers of such stories into English have actually changed the endings to make them happy ones, something Americans generally prefer.

Similarly, many discourses in the languages of the Orient do not employ initial topic-paragraphs that state the purpose of a discourse. In fact, topic sentences and topic paragraphs are often regarded as impolite, because they start a section by introducing the conclusion. This seems presumptuous in some cultures, in which speakers or writers first prefer to give all the evidence or reasons for certain conclusions, with the hope that the readers or listeners will come to the proper point of view. But this organization of a discourse seems to many Westerners as simply beating around the bush and disguising one's real intent.

### A. Time

All references to time are essentially linear (time moves only in one direction) and relative, in the sense that time is always being determined by past and future time. Calendrical time is usually based on some important event, for example, the birth of an important person (e.g. AD and BC), a culturally important event (the Hegira for Islam), the period of a particular dynasty (especially in the Orient and in the Middle East), or some great cataclysm, for example, floods or famines.

Good writers and story-tellers are, however, never satisfied with linear time. They insist on flashbacks to fill in a knowledge of important prior events, and they like flash-forwards to suggest that something significant is going to happen later. For this purpose they use such expressions as "as will soon be noted" or "as has happened even until this day," in which the time of a past event is

related to the time of the verbal account.

## B. Space

Physical space is normally regarded as consisting of three dimensions: height, breadth, and depth, but in some languages there are other spatial relations that a treated like dimensions, for example, *above*, *below*, *behind*, *in front of*, *near*, *around*, etc. Discourse space is generally treated in relation to a communicator, but it may also be related to the position of a dominant character in an account, for example, the location of Jesus in some of the Gospel accounts.

References to space may also occur with verbs of movement, e.g. *come*, *go*, *arrive*, *leave*, *return*, *enter*, *exit*, and the range of meaning in any context may depend on the meaning of still other words. In Hellenistic Greek the verb *erchomai* may mean "come" or "go," but if the verb *hupago* "to go" is in the same context, then *erchomai* can only mean "to come."

Lexical space may depend largely on context. Note, for example, the following English expressions indicating either space or time: *first in line, first to arrive; in front, in time; throughout the land, throughout the night,* as well as verbs and nouns referring to space or time: *approach the village, approach noon; end of the hour, end of the journey.*

Languages may also have spatial systems. In the ancient world of the Middle East the sky was a dome, the earth was flat with a great river encircling it, and the land was supported by subterranean water, but usually with the help of some mythic entity, for example, a huge turtle, a strong hero, or massive columns. The gods inhabited the heavens or tall mountains, and hell or Hades was down because the dead are normally buried in the earth. But spatial orientations may depend largely on local geographical features. For example, Doleib Hill near Malakal in the Sudan is only about three feet higher than the surrounding plain, but it is just high enough never to be inundated by the Nile. Accordingly, it must be a "hill."

Extensive distances must usually be calculated in terms of time, for example, "light years," but in some cultures even short distances are reckoned in terms of time. For example, a particular town may be so many days away, that is, the number of days it takes to walk the required distance. In Switzerland the distance

between two points along trails is given in hours and minutes, but in Germany similar spatial distances are given in kilometers.

Nevertheless, translating expressions for space, as well as for time, may involve serious problems if the numbers have symbolic values. The 12,000 stadia of the symbolic New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse is equivalent to about 1,500 miles, but in Judaism and Christianity the number 12 has important meaning, for example, the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples in the Gospel accounts. Also the 144 cubits (12 × 12) for the height of the wall of the New Jerusalem has important symbolic meaning. But transposing all these symbolic numbers into present-day measurements of space can seriously rob the text of much of its figurative meaning, and for the Apocalypse the figurative values are what count. For such relations some type of footnote is usually required if readers are to understand what is actually involved.

## C. Class

As already noted in the discussion of discourse features of the paragraph about kreteks, the classes of fragrances and atmospheric conditions proved to be significant ways of indicating unity. In addition the use of specific rather than generic language, for example, the reference to *government officials and taxi drivers* as a way of speaking about people in general is important, because terms that are more readily "picturable" always carry more impact.

New types of contexts may, however, change the traditional patterns of grouping entities into classes. For example, in the past a high percentage of people in the Western World made out grocery lists on the basis of the types of objects people wished to buy, for example, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, bread, etc. At present, however, many people make out lists in terms of the space utilized by shoppers as they go up and down aisles toward the check-out counters.

Some texts, however, purposely violate class expectations in order to describe events symbolically. For example, the first few pages of Claude Simon's novel, *Le Vent* "The Wind" are almost unintelligible because of the broken sentences, the unusual grammar, and the mixed up word order. But soon a reader begins to realize that this is a description of the effects of a whirl-wind. The chaotic grammar becomes a metaphor of the contents of the novel.

## D. Connectivity

The connectivity of events is a particularly important feature of narratives, history, and biography, for example, condition, (*if this, then that*), concession (*although this, nevertheless that*), purpose (*do this in order to do that*), result (*because of this, therefore that*). In many texts, however, sequences appear to violate normal patterns of connectivity. For example, Kafka's remarkable novel *The Castle* describes the experiences of a man who must visit the owner of a castle, but he is never able to accomplish his goal. Each episode is almost frighteningly realistic, but the transitions do not make sense. Nevertheless, this is precisely the kind of existentialism that Kafka wished to portray, namely, the realism of experience but the ultimate meaninglessness of life.

The ordering of concepts, as in argumentation, philosophy, and scientific inquiry is even more complex than the sequencing of events. An excellent example of conceptual ordering is found in Sagan's volume *Cosmos*, p. 69.

> Newton discovered the law of inertia, the tendency of a moving object to continue moving in a straight line unless something influences it and moves it out of its path. The Moon, it seemed to Newton, would fly off in a straight line, tangential to its orbit, unless there were some other force constantly diverting the path into a near circle, pulling it in the direction of the Earth. This force Newton called gravity, and believed that it acted at a distance. There is nothing physically connecting the Earth and the Moon. And yet the Earth is constantly pulling the Moon toward us. Using Kepler's third law, Newton mathematically deduced the nature of the gravitational force. He showed that the same force that pulls an apple down to Earth keeps the Moon in its orbit and accounts for the revolutions of the then recently discovered moons of Jupiter in their orbits about that distant planet.

The first six words neatly state the content of the paragraph, and the rest of the sentence, together with the following sentence, indicates why Newton became concerned with the apparent anomaly involved in the continual circling of the Earth by the Moon. The third sentence is the core of the concept, while the

following sentence emphasizes the lack of any physical connection. And the next sentence reiterates what the Earth does, despite the lack of a physical connection.

The last two sentences provide the mathematical basis for gravity and show the practical implications of gravity for ordinary people and an explanation about the new discovery of moons circling around the planet Jupiter. This type of ordering of concepts is what makes Sagan's writing so clear and convincing.

The conceptual world of a particular culture may include hundreds of presuppositions that significantly order the manner in which people reason, and many of these underlying cultural concepts seem almost nonsensical to people in other cultures, for example, the possibility of people turning themselves into fierce animals, the use of black magic to kill a personal enemy, foretelling the future by looking into crystals, guaranteeing the help of the gods by human sacrifice, believing that dishes need to be first washed and then rinsed in water containing fresh cow dung, or determining what a person should do on a particular day by reading one's horoscope in the daily paper.

Some people also have very special ideas about different types of discourse. Many Malayalam speakers in India and Dinka speakers in the Sudan are intrigued with epic poetry, and in some churches in the Philippines, known as *Iglesia ni Cristo*, sermons are accompanied with an emotive dramatization by choruses of weeping women, while in Haiti religious texts about healing can be torn up and made into tea as a cure for any illness.

Some presuppositions, however, seem much more reasonable. For example, saving up for one's old age, chewing the bark of an African yohimbine tree to increase sexual potency, regarding one's reputation after death as one sure kind of immortality, and becoming more and more skeptical about progress in a world that is rapidly outgrowing many of its natural resources. Without the knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other cultures, a translator's perspective of the world is tragically restricted. And it is not surprising that the most serious mistakes in translation are made because of ignorance about the views and values of other cultures.

## E. Gradation

Gradation is a process of increasing or decreasing the intensi-

ty of some aspect of a text. For example, a short-story or novel usually contains a series of events in which the characters are faced with increasingly difficult circumstances. But finally, when at the apex of a narrative the hero makes a crucial decision or acts to resolve the crisis, the story unwinds until a new steady state is reached.

Scientific texts may also exhibit series of gradations, often spoken of as "peeling the onion." For example, in the *Scientific American* the first section of an article often describes in more or less ordinary language the importance of some new discovery or technique. A following section describes essentially the same subject matter but in considerably more detail, and frequently there is a final section written primarily for specialists.

Descriptions of landscapes often follow much the same type of gradation but in terms of greater detail and specific features. This type of description, which moves from the broad picture to more intricate elements, is typical of many book reviews and descriptions of personality traits. But the order may also be reversed, and a description may begin with minor details and then move gradually to the larger features.

## F. Reference

Reference consists of two major types: (1) pronominal reference, either referring back (anaphoric) or referring to something ahead (cataphoric), and (2) naming reference, identifying entities and activities by means of proper names.

In place of the traditional triple reference to first, second, and third persons in communication, Navajo has a fourth person, that is, the next third person mentioned in a text. Many languages also distinguish between inclusive and exclusive first person plural, that is, an inclusive *we* referring to the speaker and his audience in contrast with an exclusive *we* that includes the speaker and his associates, but excludes the audience. The wrong use of inclusive and exclusive first person plural has led to many serious problems in litigation.

Proper names are also aspects of reference, because they normally only "refer" rather than "name" classes. But in some languages the same person may have several names, depending on the

degree of intimacy between the speaker and the referent. This type of problem often shows up in translations of Russian novels, in which one and the same person may be referred to by four or five different names.

## G. Dialogue

The organization of conversatinon is primarily a matter of dialogue, in which participants interact in a *yes/no*, a *question/answer*, or a *granted/but* context. In many instances, however, a speaker tries to anticipate the response of an interlocutor and introduces "anticipatory feedback," consciously answering the objections that are likely to come from an audience.

The stream-of-consciousness type of utterance is typical of a person who speaks to himself or herself, and it often contains considerable amount of anticipatory feedback, in which a person tries to answer himself or herself. Such speech is difficult to analyze structurally because it is often impossible to fill in the gaps. Psychiatrists, however, make extensive use of such speech since it indirectly reveals much that concerns a patient and which is so personal as to inhibit a person's supplying such information in a more logical form.

Some people who talk to themselves employ well organized utterances designed to test ideas in front of an imaginary audience. In fact, some people even introduce into their speech possible objections from an imaginary audience.

Prayer is a very special kind of dialogue, in which speech is directed to a supernatural entity, but there is usually no apparent immediate response, although some people insist that God does immediately and audibly answer their prayers by telling them what is to happen and what they must do.

## H. Literary formulas

All cultures have developed ways in which the basic relations between sets of words are organized into a number of general literary formulas, e. g. narratives, conversation, proverbs, puns, epic accounts, animal tales, and poetry (with measured lines and rhythm), and some cultures have a number of specific literary forms, for example, history, short-stories, scientific essays, busi-

ness letters, contracts, prophecy (speaking about the future and/or on behalf of God), apocalyptic (prophecy about an increasingly bad future until everything is altered by a messiah), and sonnets (the most elaborate and condensed literary form).

Christina Rossetti's poem *Remember* is one of the finest representatives of a centuries-old tradition of sonnet poetry in Western Europe. Note the 14-line pattern in which the first eight lines pose the problem and the last six lines suggest an answer, especially highlighted in the last two lines. The rhyme pattern is also carefully structured as abbaabba and cddfcf. The word *remember* occurs three times in the first eight lines and twice in the six line response, which also includes two occurrences of *forget*. A literal translation of this type of highly structured text would never have precisely the same literary character as the original, but the theme could be reworked into a corresponding sonnet in another language, as a type of "variations on a theme," occurring frequently in music.

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more, day by day,
You tell me of our future that you planned;
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve,
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Some poems have such a "loose" structure that early critics denounced such productions as not even being poems. Carl Sandburg's poem entitled *Grass* was particularly criticized for its lack of rhyme, its irregular rhythm, and the prose insert in lines 7–9, but these lines carry a powerful impact, because it suggests that most people are completely unaware of some of the great

tragic battles in modern history.

Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work —
I am grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysberg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am grass.
Let me work.

The translation of highly structured literary productions is always a problem because the very process of translation seems to require a rather high degree of parallelism in both form and content. Ezra Pound's translations of Chinese poetry were more like musical "variations on a theme" rather than actual translations, but Pound's artistry with words produced results that attracted considerable praise. But some poetry simply defies close or even loose translation. One professional translator of Japanese literature into English was asked to translate all of the poems of a noted Japanese poet, but he refused. He did, however, offer to translate all the poems that could be poems in English, because he recognized that many of the cultural allusions could not be satisfactorily translated into English, and introducing extensive notes about cultural differences would destroy the remarkable poetic character of the original poems.

Essentially the same problems exist in translating some Arabic and Chinese poems into English. Translators of poetry from Arabic into English have been conspicuously more successful than translators of poetry from Chinese into English, perhaps because the poems in Arabic have seemed to be closer to the Western World as the result of centuries of culture contact. But some translators of Chinese texts into English have felt constrained to communicate something of their distinctive cultural heritage by means of translated poetry, and as a result many translations of Chinese

poetry have been much less successful. Poetry is not the medium for communicating cultural distinctiveness, and recently there has been a marked shift in Chinese thought about such issues, due in considerable measure to the literary journal *Renditions*, published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

## 5.2 *Major content features of texts*

In addition to organizational features of time, space, class, etc., texts also have important features of content: completeness, unity, novelty, appropriateness, and relevance, which in various ways and in different proportions make texts effective.

Completeness normally means thtat a text appears to cover the entire subject suggested by the title or by the topic paragraph that defines the range of content. Readers appreciate an article that seems to cover a subject adequately. In some cases, however, a text seems to drag on too long, as at the end of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

In addition, however, there needs to be some sense of unity. The beginning and the end need to be somehow related. As already noted, even in the short paragraph about kreteks, the occurrence of *Indonesia* in the first and last sentence helps to provide this sense of unity.

If an author is going to hold the attention of readers, a text must also include something novel and unexpected. A short-story, and especially detective novels, must include events that are not anticipated by readers. If the end of a book is almost predictable from the beginning, it will soon be neglected by readers.

Texts also need to be appropriate for the setting in which they are communicated. A lecture and a sermon may have somewhat the same purpose, that is, to significantly influence the thought and behavior of listeners, but the contents of a lecture or of a sermon are based on quite different sources of information and respond to quite different sets of presuppositions. Lecturers normally cite important new discoveries, while preachers refer to divinely inspired ancient writings. Furthermore, the language registers for lectures and sermons are quite distinct. On one occasion, for example, a visiting preacher greeted different members of a congregation after the benediction, and a small boy said to the preacher, "That was sure a nice talk." The boy's mother immediately intervened and insisted, "That was a sermon, not a talk," but the boy replied, "It wasn't a sermon, because he made us all

laugh."

Relevance for receptors of communication is a major factor in communication, but relevance depends on a number of factors: the intelligibility of the contents of a text, the extent to which a receptor thinks he or she can benefit from the contents, and the physical and psychological proximity between the receptor and the contents. A notice about the death of more than 10,000 persons drowned in a tidal wave and flood in Bangladesh may seem much less relevant than the armed robbery of a house next door, unless, of course, a family member happens to have been in Bangladesh at the time.

## 5.3 *Rhetorical features of a text*

In order to enhance the impact and appeal of a text, all languages employ a number of formal and semantic features. The number and distribution of such features differs widely in different kinds of texts and in different languages.

The principal formal features include unusual word order (placing the subject at the end rather than at the beginning of a sentence), repetition of words or phrases (for emphasis), embedding of one idea within another, the incorporation of parenthetical information (usually in parenthesis or set off by commas), measured lines (as a part of poetic structures), parallelism (widely employed in liturgical and political texts that frequently include responses between speaker and audience), a telegraphic style (e.g. Hemingway) in contrast with elaborate rhetorical structures (Faulkner), back-flashes and forward-flashes (information that is not in a normal temporal sequence), parallelism and chiasm (the order abcabc in contrast with abccba), rhyme (previously regarded as indispensable for poetry , but more recently considered somewhat pedantic and artificial), rhythm (either in terms of various types of feet: iambic, trochaic, spondee, anapest, and dactyl, based on stress contrasts, length of syllables, and even on tone patterns in Classical Chinese), highlighting (emphasizing some feature of the content by order of words or by the amount of information employed to characterize some entity), purposeful deletion (*if you do that*, *I'll* ...! in which case the lack of a specific threat may be more forceful than an actual threat), ungrammatical arrangement of words to call special attention to certain aspects of a text (technically called, anacoloutha, for which

E. E. Cummings was rightly famous). For example, note his following four-line poem:

> since feeling is first
> who pays any attention
> to the syntax of things
> will never wholly kiss you

Some of the more important semantic features of texts include plays on the meanings of words (puns), purposeful ambiguity or obscurity (especially in detective stories), irony and sarcasm, understating (litotes) and overstating (hyperbole), euphemisms (using acceptable ways of speaking about something bad or taboo), specific reference in contrast with generic reference, indirection (saying one thing while actually referring to something else, for example, indicating the wealth of someone by saying that he has a ten room apartment on Park Avenue at 61st street in New York City), oxymorons as means of calling special attention to some entity or features (for example, *square circle*, *chaotic silence*), figurative language (for example, Sandburg's use of *throwing confetti and blowing horns* to characterize life and *in the dust ... in the cool tombs* to describe death).

Many people associate figurative language almost exclusively with literary texts, especially poetry and novels, but scientists often need figurative expressions to explain some of the remarkable aspects of science. Note the following statements from the introduction to *The Lives of a Cell* by Lewis Thomas: "Evolution is still an infinitely long and tedious biological game, with only the winners staying at the table, but the rules are beginning to look more flexible. We live in a dancing matrix of viruses that dart rather like bees, from organism to organism, from plant to insect to mammal to me and back again, and into the sea, tugging along pieces of this genome, strings of genes from that, transplanted grafts of DNA, passing around heredity as though at a great party."

The following figurative uses of language are taken from a series of articles in *Science News* (July 3, 1999), but they represent only a few of the relatively wide range of semantic "oddities."

1. In an article about the discovery of sharpened stone points found in the neck bone of a wild ass that died some 50,000 years ago, the discovery is called *an archeological smoking gun* since the

manufacture of such weapons by Neanderthals has been generally denied.

In this same article a key paragraph ends with the statement *stone points added a deadly edge*. The name of the article also contains an interesting semantic shift: *Neanderthal Hunters Get to the Point*.

2. An article on the ways in which malaria disrupts the immune system speaks about the T-cells as the *workhorses* of the immune system and insists that *dendrite cells, as an area of investigation, are hot right now*.

3. An article entitled *Outta sight! A crafty peek at the sun's back* is about studies of the far side of the sun. The first sentence ends with the statement *astronomers are no longer in the dark*, since they can pick up the location of an ultraviolet hot spot by equipment in the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory.

4. An article entitled *Amino acid puts the muscle in mussel glue* about the unusually strong adhesive used by mussels to attach themselves to wave lashed rocks describes the cross-linking protein strands that have *to kick in in order for the adhesive to perform*.

5. An article entitled *If Mom chooses Dad, more ducklings survive* presents evidence that a female mallard duck that gets to pick her mate has ducklings that are more likely to survive. The researcher is herself surprised at the results, which are summarized in the statement, *The mothers build the nest, the mothers sit on the nest, the kids feed themselves, but the daddies hang around. We don't get it*.

6. The article on the manner in which the DNA of some bacterias are transformed into crystals when a food source is strictly limited is highlighted by a clever parody, *when the going gets tough, the tough stop growing*.

7. An important article entitled *Stop-and Go Science* about the problems of traffic in cities around the world describes how scientists are trying very hard *to cram more vehicles onto existing roadways without putting highway speeds into a nose-dive*. But the number of theories about traffic flow include *a whole zoo of models*. No one, however, seems to understand how cars suddenly slow down to the same speed and *jell into a type of unified, moving mass*.

8. A fascinating article about the extent of carbon-dioxide in the environment during the last 10,000 years *is threatening to upend ideas about how much of this greenhouse gas filled the atmosphere*

*before the industrial revolution*. But the study of carbon-dioxide in birch leaves from an ancient Dutch bog *gets a chilly reception from ice-core researchers*.

9. An article about *the Secret Lives of Squirrel Monkeys* describes a male Pacino monkey in Surinam as an animal who *brawls hard and dirty, and he stoically takes his licks. Constant no-holds-barred battles have left wicked scars on his mouth and nose ... the undisputed champ of daily tooth-and-claw clashes* But the social arrangements of Pacino and his terrorized troop in Surinam are as different from those of Costa Rican squirrel monkeys *as the street gang's code of conduct is from Amish etiquette. Moreover, Peruvian squirrel monkeys take another path altogether, emphasizing what some might call "girl power."*

None of the above underlined expressions is particularly obscure in meaning for a person who has a reasonable command of English, but the extent to which such figurative expressions can be translated directly into another language depends on the creativity of the translator and on the presumed knowledge of the intended readers. Most readers are likely to know a "street gang's code of conduct," but they may not know anything about "Amish etiquette," and a footnote about the Amish people might seem overdone, although it might be useful to employ in the text "the behavior of those who refuse to employ force to defend their rights." Here is precisely where the knowledge and judgment of translators are crucial, and this is precisely why exceptional translators produce unusually good translations.

Working out a set of rules for adapting figurative expressions from one language to another is usually a waste of time because no two situations are ever really the same. The purposes of a publication, the intended audience, the ways in which a text will be used, and the special skills and knowledge of the translator are all factors that vary radically from one text to another. But in order to become more sensitive to what professional translators actually do, it is essential to study translations by expert translators. This can perhaps be best done by asking three fundamental questions concerning additions, deletions, and changes in form and meaning.

1. What are the specific differences between the source and receptor texts? 2. What are the apparent contextual reasons for such differences? 3. What sociolinguistic factors seem to justify or question such differences?

In order to indicate more precisely what is involved in studying texts and their translation an illustrative paragraph has been selected from a bilingual publication in French and English, published for air travelers by Air France. The title of the article is "Spielberg, the Phoenix of Hollywood" by Fran? ois Forestier, October, 1998 (the translator is, however, not named). But in order to examine a number of features of the translation, the various differences are indicated by corresponding numbers in square brackets preceding the corresponding expressions.

### *French text*:

[1] Pour 139 dollars par semaine, Spielberg [2] loue alors un deux-pièces à Los Angeles. [3] Très rapidement, [4] il se voit confier la réalisation d'épisodes télé: il tourne *Eyes* avec Joan Crawford. La star, [5] réalisant que le jeune cinéaste n'a aucune expérience, [6] pique une colère. [7] Spielberg tient bon. [8] On lui confie un épisode de *Colombo*, et deux ou trois autres petits jobs. En 1972, il se lance dans un long métrage [9] bizarre, un truc intitulé *Duel*, [10] qui dure 74 minutes. [11] L'odyssée d'un conducteur poursuivi par un camion anonyme, sans raison apparente. [12] Le patron de la chaîne de télé NBC voit le film, demande: [13] "Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? [14] et laisse faire." Spielberg en profite pour présenter le film dans des festivals, dont celui d'Avoriaz. Un an plus tard, [15] *Duel* sort sur les écrans, [16] rallongé à 85 minutes. C'est la sensation. [17] Tourné pour quelques dizaine de milliers de dollars, le film décuple la mise. [18] "J'ai décidé de passer au cinéma," déclare alors Spielberg. Il a vingt-quatre ans.

### *English translation*:

Spielberg [2] rented a two-room, [1] $ 139-a-week apartment in Los Angeles. [3] He [4]was asked to direct episodes for TV series and made *Eyes* with Joan Crawford. The star [6] flew off the handle [5] when she found out that the young man didn't have any experience, [7] but Spielberg stood his ground. [8] He was asked to do an episode of *Colombo* as well as two or three other small jobs. In 1972 he made his first full-length feature, [9] a bizarre thriller called *Duel*. [10] Seventy-four minutes [11] about a face-

less, psychopathic truck driver who tries to run a motorist off a California highways for no apparent reason. [12] When the head of NBC saw the movie he asked, [13] "What the hell is that?" [14] but gave it his seal of approval. Spielberg took advantage by presenting *Duel* at several festivals, including Avoriaz. One year later [15,16] an eighty-five minute version hit the screens. It was a sensation. [17] The film, which cost only a few tens of thousands of dollars to make, paid back its investment tenfold. [18] "That's when I decided to leave TV for the movies," Spielberg says. He was twenty-four.

The English translator of the French text is exceptionally qualified in matching the journalistic style of the French text, particularly in the appropriate correspondences in idiomatic words and phrases, many of which are not mentioned in the following notes. From the various modifications and additions made in the translation, it is evident that the translator is much more knowledgeable about the motion picture industry than the writer. But the following analysis of the similarities and differences does not include all of the minor details nor every time some such feature recurs, for example, the use of different English tense forms for the journalistic present tense in French.

1. The English text begins typically with the personal subject, rather than with an adverbial phrase.
2. The French text employs primarily present-tense forms, but these are generally recast into appropriate past tense expressions in English.
3. The French text says nothing at this point about the speed with which Spielberg progressed in the motion picture industry, but there are numerous references to this in other parts of the French article, and apparently the translator believed that this would also be an appropriate place to repeat this theme.
4. The French text has a complex reflexive verb phrase with *voir* "to see," that functions like a passive, and accordingly, the English text employs *was asked*.
5. The participial phrase construction between the subject and the main verb is typical in French, but unusual in English. In fact, a literal translation would have made the English text sound more like a legal document. Accordingly, the English text moves directly from the subject to the idiom expressing anger, and the cause of the anger occurs in the predicate of the English translation.
6. The French idiom *pique une colère* literally, "sting an anger"

is appropriately rendered in English as "flew off the handle," although the translator could have used a number of different expressions, "got angry," "became furious," "showed her temper."

7. The French idiom *tient bon*, literally, "to hold well," is a common expression for "standing firm" or "refusing to yield" or "refusing to give in."

8. The French phrase with an impersonal subject, the dative pronoun, and the verb *confier* is somewhat more formal than the English translation, but the English passive *was asked* is a typical way of representing the impersonal French expression.

9. In the French text the term *bizarre* qualifies the noun *métrage*, a French equivalent of a full-length feature. But in English the adjective *bizarre* goes much better with the following term *truc*, a popular term for a thriller.

10. The French text places the clause about "lasting 74 minutes" at the end of the sentence. But the English text breaks the text at this point and combines the phrase "Seventy-four minutes" with the following sentence. This change in sentence content makes a better transition and helps to explain somewhat the translator's unusual addition.

11. Whereas the French text only speaks about "the trip of a driver pursued by a nameless truck without reason," the translator evidently felt that such a description of the motion picture did not do justice to a film that had such an important impact on Spielberg's career. The statements in the two texts are not necessarily contradictory, but certainly the English text contains a substantive addition.

12. In the French text the writer evidently thought that it was necessary to identify the NBC as a television company, but to the translator such an addition apparently seemed unnecessary. In the French text the two parts represent structurally two different sentences, although semantically they are logically related. According, the English translator made this connection evident by translating, *When the head of NBC saw the movie*, *he asked*,

13. Although the French text has only the literal statement, "*What's that*!" the context certainly suggests something more surprising and unusual. The English translator evidently felt it was important to translate in terms of the context, not merely in terms of the words.

14. The French text has only a phrase meaning literally "and let it be done," but the context suggests much more. In the case of

expressions marked as 13 and 14, the English translator has evidently tried to make the text more realistic by translating what was evidently implied by what was said.

15, 16. These two segments of the French text and the English translation need to be treated together because of a complex problem of order. In the French text the expression *Duel sort sur les écrans* is a perfectly natural ways of talking by releasing a film to theater chains. But in view of the fact that the picture proved to be a sensation, it apparently seemed to the translator that something like "hit the screens" would be more appropriate.

In the French text the statement *rallongé à 85 minutes*, literally "lengthened to 85 minutes" would perhaps depreciate the value of what was added. Accordingly, the English translation has simply *an eighty-five minute version*.

17. In French the participial phrase that precedes the main part of the sentence is typical in French (in fact, such constructions were also popular with Cicero in ancient Rome). But a literal translation into English would be particularly awkward. It is for this reason, that the English translation begins with the subject and is then followed by a restrictive clause.

18. The French text means only "passing to motion pictures" or "changing to motion pictures," but the English translator evidently believed that it was important to indicate that Spielberg was giving up work on television shows and would be working completely for the movies. This is simply an edition to make the text more explicit and clear.

This type of study of what expert professional translators actually do is the best way to learn how to translate. Such an approach is far better than attempting to memorize rules about embedded clauses, figurative meanings, and stylistic equivalences. A translator needs to develop a "feeling" for what is appropriate for different types of texts being translated for different kinds of audiences who will no doubt use the translation for different purposes. What translators need most of all is judgment, and this can only be acquired by seeing what competent translators have done and by experimenting with different kinds of texts for different types of audiences. Personal guidance by competent teachers is far better than any textbook on translating, because translating is essentially a skill, and skills are best learned in an apprenticeship context. This, however, also means that teachers of translation need to be expert translators.

Chapter 6

# Representative Treatments of Translating

The basic principles of translating are not as diverse or as intricate as many persons think. In most instances their apparent differences largely reflect different kinds of content, diverse audiences, and distinct purposes. Accordingly, it may be useful to look more carefully at various books on translation, especially because the practice of translating and interpreting in the 20th Century has increased much more rapidly than at any other time in history. The expansion of world trade, the development of multinational corporations and international entities, such as the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, and regional groupings in Southeast Asia and Africa, inevitably increase the need for translation and interpretation.

The need for such cooperative efforts is highlighted by the fact that populations are rapidly outgrowing natural resources, especially water, and some irresponsible dictators still rattle atomic weapons. But fortunately, our electronic age now makes possible interlingual communication on a level never dreamed of before. Email and internet are making the world a multi-language community.

## 6.1 Developments in interlingual studies

In order to match the need for interlingual communication, the teaching of foreign languages is rapidly increasing, and in Europe alone there are at least seventy-five institutions concentrating on teaching the principles and practice of translating and interpreting. In addition, many university departments of foreign languages are introducing courses in interlingual communication.

There are now more than forty academic journals dealing with the issues of translation and interpreting, and during the 20th Century more than 300 books have been published about problems and solutions to interlingual communication. The number of professional translators has grown enormously. In the European Union there are some 2,500 in-house translators, while in Hong

Kong alone there are some 6,000 full-time free-lance and agency translators. The Professional Translators Society of China has a membership of more than 40,000 translators, and the total number of people in the world spending either most or all of their time translating or interpreting probably exceeds 300,000, but they cannot keep up with the demand.

A number of commercial firms are also investing heavily in programs for translating. Already there are more than eighty-five sets of languages for which there is at least some automated system for translating, and there are more than 400 orthographic systems for computer use. Internet translating and interpreting represents a thirty billion dollar a year market that is growing at the rate of 14% percent a year.

In a number of academic institutions translating and interpreting have evidently become academic disciplines in their own right, especially if one regards the development of technical vocabulary as an index of professional status. Consider, for example, the following representative English terms employed in speaking and writing about translating and interpreting: *conceptual paradigms*, *polysystems*, *skopos*, *poststructuralism*, *computerized corpora*, *postcolonialization*, *globalization*, *subspecialties*, *cultural studies*, *literary theory*, *culturally oriented research*, *competing paradigms*, *conceptual and disciplinary divisions*, *abstract category of verbal communication*, *minimal processing effort*, *Hallidayan linguistic theory*, *interpersonal pragmatics*, *audiovisual synchronization*, *systematic loss of politeness phenomena*, *computerized corpora*, *explicitation hypothesis*, *sanitization*, *computer-discovered regularities in translation strategies*, *poststructuralist translation theory*, *discursive self-definition*, *confrontation with alien discourses*, *transdiscursive texts*, *the rhetoricity of language*, *gendering*, *Gricean mechanism*. If specialized vocabulary is a sign of a separate, emerging discipline, there is no doubt that translating and interpreting are creating a good deal of academic autonomy, static, and status.

Professional specialization has become so extensive that some people insist on separating translating and interpreting into two distinct disciplines of interlingual communication. As already noted, interpreters need considerably greater immediate knowledge about the subject matter being communicated, and they must also make more rapid decisions and be less nervous about their own limitations. But interpreters and translators deal with essentially

the same problems of textual correspondences.

One important reason for skepticism about the need for more books on translation is that some people seem to have a special gift for interlingual communication, and without any formal training in translating they become first-rate translators. They appear to have an exceptional aptitude for effective interlingual communication, and they simply do not need years of training. In fact, it is often said that particularly competent translators and interpreters are born, not made.

More and more evidence seems to point to the fact that highly creative translating and interpreting are largely inherent skills similar to what occurs in the fields of music and graphic art. Almost anyone can learn to draw pictures of a landscape or play music in an amateurish way, but people must have unusual innate aptitudes if they are to be professionally successful.

Perhaps the description of the training and experience of two real persons, purposely named Marcos and Guillaume respectively so as not to reveal their true identity, may be helpful in understanding the nature of interlingual skill in communication.

Marcos grew up in a strictly monolingual context of Spanish, but he had the advantage of an excellent education in Latin and Greek and went on to learn French, German, and English, although he never learned to speak German or English because he had no opportunity to live in countries where these languages were spoken. As a part of his teaching Classical Greek and Latin, he did a considerable amount of translating, and a number of his translations of Latin and Greek authors, as well as books translated from French, German, and English, were published in Spanish. In fact, he ultimately wrote several books on the history and practice of translating and was honored by his academic colleagues for unusual competence in translating.

By way of contrast, Guillaume was educated in a trilingual setting of German, French, and English, and spoke all three languages without noticeable accent. His university training was exceptional and because of his language competence he became a translator in companies in the United States doing business with affiliates in Europe. Because of extensive experience as a trilingual translator, he was hired by a New York firm to handle all translations of documents and correspondence involving English, French, and German.

His translations were not regularly reviewed, but gradually

responses from affiliates in Europe indicated that they had evidently not accurately understood the translations in German and French. In fact, after a few months one affiliate wrote confidentially to say that it would be much more satisfactory if communications could be sent in English, because people in Europe were confused and were wasting too much time trying to figure out the meaning of letters and documents in French and German.

Guillaume had no psychological blocks in speaking foreign languages, because he spoke them freely, but he had evidently not understood that translating means correct communicating, and as a result his word-for-word written renderings were often misleading. In fact, it seems incredible that a competent trilingual speaker could so seriously misunderstand the nature of translating. Some people, however, seem to never overcome the serious mistake of thinking that translating means representing consistently the dictionary meaning of words. His speech never betrayed such word-for-word correspondences, but in translating he was intellectually blind to the nature of his task as a translator.

Skill in translating is not a common commodity. For example, from time to time the European Union sends out a notice about an examination for people wanting to be in-house translators of the EU. Frequently, more than 15,000 persons will apply, but the total number of persons who are permitted to take the examination is greatly reduced on the basis of language experience and academic training. As a result a typical number of persons actually taking an examination is approximately 5,000, but the number that are successful in passing the examination is normally less than ten. As already noted in Chapter 1, the aptitude for special competence in interlingual communication is about as restricted as it is for music and art.

Competence in translating and interpreting may be meaningfully discussed in terms of the position of people on a bell-curve with the typical two dimensions: the horizontal dimension indicating the degree of competence from practically no ability to extremely creative ability and the vertical dimension indicating the approximate number of persons at each point along the curve. Such curves are useful devices for grasping certain important concepts, even when it is impossible to assign numerical values to the numbers of persons and the degrees of competence.

Persons on the left of such a curve will generally be inadequate for effective translating, and up to a point near the top of

the curve most people should probably not be encouraged to become professional translators or interpreters, although they may be good mathematicians, expert clothing designers, or first-rate administrators. At the same time, it is essential to recognize the importance of motivation in all such situations, because high motivation can compensate to some extent for lack of inherent ability.

Those with competence near the top of the curve and down the major part of the right hand side of the curve can certainly learn to translate various types of largely routine documents, such as letters, newspaper articles, business agendas, political speeches, and government notices. These are precisely the persons who can benefit significantly from courses in translating offered by universities and institutes with intensive programs lasting three or four years. But for texts with considerable figurative language, legal terminology, merchandizing, and scientific content, it is important to have persons who are especially competent in understanding the source text and in reproducing the content and the style in another language. Even some of the most gifted translators can and do profit from a study of what other first-rate translators actually do. Such realistic studies of translation principles and practice can greatly enrich their own work.

The description and classification of texts on the basis of form and content, and therefore of interpretation, may be useful in speaking about types of translation problems. For the most part, it is possible to characterize five different, but somewhat overlapping, types of texts, although some of the following text types may have overlapping features:

1. Texts in which the words, grammar, and discourse structure represent the ordinary day-to-day experience found in personal letters, news reports, agendas, commercial advertising, business notices, daily progress reports, and many short stories. Such texts generally contain well known words and except for common idioms, they employ few figurative expressions.
2. Texts with relatively well-known words (although often with highly specific meanings) and complex grammar so as to include a number of restrictive features within sentence units, for example, laws, constitutions, bylaws, wills, and contracts.
3. Texts with highly technical vocabulary having very specific meanings and relatively clear grammatical constructions, for example, books on science, technical journals, instructions for engaging in scientific processes.

4. Texts with unusual figurative meanings of words, for example, cult histories, elaborate mantras, translations of the Koran and the Bible, and memorized texts of secret societies.
5. Texts with numerous idiomatic expressions and types of content that require figurative interpretation, for example, myths, parables, proverbs, lyric poetry, songs, operas, and symbolic novels

To this list of five basic text types, it may be useful to mention another important, but highly restricted text type, namely, political documents prepared for international bodies about rapidly developing events. Such documents must be factually true, or the leaders will be severely criticized. Nevertheless, these documents usually cannot tell all the truth, since reference to or even indirect allusions to such matters could serious damage future developments. Political leaders and their speech writers, as well as their translators, must be sensitive to both the content of reports and the possible emotive responses of audiences. As a result, some political leaders feel constrained to talk but to say little or nothing, and translators are under great pressure to do the same.

Translators and interpreters must also be constantly aware of different types of audiences: school children, sports fans, retirees, and professionals with their own jargons. They must also be aware that texts may have different purposes. Some are simply for amusement and enjoyment while others are crucial for what people want to do, for example, how to assemble a complicated machine

Many translators enjoy the challenge of literary texts, even those that are almost on the margin of intelligibility, for example, the highly figurative writing of James Joyce. Others like the complexity of Faulkner's sentences, and they may even believe that a strictly word-for-word translation communicates certain hidden concepts that freer translations overlook. For example, Buber and Rosenzweig made a literal translation of the Hebrew Bible so as to give German readers a "feeling" of how ancient Hebrew speakers might have understood the text. Chouraqui has attempted to do this in French, and a comparable word-for-word translation of Genesis 1.1–2 into English would be: "Heading, Elohim was creating the heavens and the earth, the earth was tohu-bohu, darkness was on the faces of the abyss, but the breath of Elohim spread out over the faces of the water."

Other translators find the greatest challenge in the intellectual task of communicating significant information so as to produce

important responses in the activity and beliefs of people in other language-cultures. Their concern is for the ways in which receptors understand, appreciate, and respond to a translation. They regard translating and interpreting as communication, and what counts for them is the correctness with which the messages are received.

## 6.2 *Illustrative examples of different treatments of translating*

The generally negative reaction of students to books about principles of translating are due in part to fact that they have not had enough practice in translating to be able to evaluate or criticize such books in a relevant manner. In addition, many of the textbooks appear to use a vocabulary designed to impress educators that translation is a legitimate academic discipline. But what puzzles students most is that the various books are really not that different. They all seem to be saying much the same things but with different illustrative data, diverse technical vocabulary, and prescriptive advice without explanations of the empirical sources of such principles

Because of the reaction of many students who bring up such issues during discussion periods following lectures, it may perhaps be useful to characterize briefly some of the more insightful books. But I have included primarily those books that state principles of translation and follow these up with plenty of useful examples. Some of these volumes are, however, pedagogical textbooks designed to teach students step by step how to translate various kinds of texts. The order of presentation of these volumes is based on dates of publication.

1. *Zielsprache* by Fritz Guttinger (1963) is a delightfully written book that begins with the controversial and negative statements by Ortega y Gasset, Goethe, Schleiermacher, and Benjamin, but ends with a fascinating collection of some of the most important statements about translation in the 19th and early 20th Century. The titles of the chapters indicate quite clearly the down-to-earth character of the volume: "Translating (more or less) literary texts," "Everything that is useful for a translator," "Five sources for making mistakes," and "When translating is the same as writing." The range of problems dealt with is excellent, and although

the text is in German, most of the illustrative examples are from English.

2. *Toward a Science of Translating* by Eugene A. Nida (1964) attempts to apply to translating the relevant insights from linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociosemiotics, cultural anthropology, lexicology, and communication theory. The principal source of illustrative data is Bible translations, and the prospective audience was the several thousand persons engaged in translating the Scriptures into more than a 1,000 languages.

Unfortunately many people assumed that my concepts of translation developed as a result of working on biblical texts, but my ideas about translating were formulated years earlier while a Greek Major at the University of California at Los Angeles. I was introduced to the writings of such persons as Sapir, Bloomfield, Pedersen, and Malinowski. I therefore saw no reason why the everyday Koine Greek of the New Testament should not be translated into the everyday level of languages spoken throughout the world.

The volume *Toward a Science of Translation* reflects a number of different insights from diverse disciplines because no single discipline or theory can possibly provide the necessary insights to deal satisfactorily with the many faceted aspects of interlingual communication.

3. *Introducción a la Traductología* by Gerardo Vázquez-Ayora (1977), with a subtitle of *Basic Course in Translating*, is a systematic course for translating from English into Spanish based on linguistic principles and divided into nine principal chapters: Preliminary analysis of a text, The application of linguistics to translating, Style, Frequent syntactic and lexical differences between English and Spanish, The application of linguistics and metalinguistics to ambiguity and redundancy, Discourse, Technical procedures in translating, and General procedures in translation — all with consistent attention to equivalence and context.

The section on style deals extensively with optional and obligatory distinctions. and the treatment of anglicisms is unusually extensive. Most of the longer texts, however, come largely from literary sources. References to the views of other specialists in translation are extensive and well documented, and the sections on translation procedures are often quite practical, but the technical terminology used to explain translation principles is translated literally from English in such a way as to profoundly disturb Span-

ish speakers, who generally dislike technical terms that are not properly formed on traditional models. Nevertheless, Georgetown University Press is to be congratulated for publishing a book that has been so helpful to many Latin Americans.

4. *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, by J-R Ladmiral (1979) deals with a number of basic translation issues from a psychological perspective. The first chapter "What is translation?" is a rapid review of developments in the field of interlingual communication. The second chapter on translation and teaching programs deals with a wide range of issues: from the correct understanding of the source text to the sociological implications of translating. The third chapter also considers a broad series of issues, from the philosophy of language to the nature of literature. The fourth chapter treats issues of stylistics, connotations, sociolinguistic problems, and the various ways in which translations may be effectively critiqued. Chapter five is a particularly effective analysis of semantics and semiotics, and a final Chapter 6 analyzes the practical application of basic translation principles. The Appendix also continues an insightful analysis of psychoanalytical discourse. The range of Ladmiral's interests and competence thoroughly justifies his criticisms of polemical, historical, and theoretical arguments against translating. While his interesting, clear style of writing makes this important book a real pleasure to read, his profound knowledge and insight about translating makes a reader see translation in a much broader frame of reference.

5. *The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation* by Joseph L. Malone (1988) has a very useful section on technical vocabulary about linguistic factors in translating and departs from most other analyses of translation by introducing dialogue as a fundamental factor in translating. The book is divided into three parts, with several chapters in each part. Part One deals with equation and substitution, divergence and convergence, amplification and reduction, repackaging, reordering, and trajection, while Part Two is concerned primarily with systematic and formalistic techniques, taxonomies, syntactic representations, and bridge techniques. Part Three treats phonetics, phonology and poetic form, rhyme, alliteration, paranomasia, and parallax.

Although the technical vocabulary may seem somewhat overwhelming, the consistency with which the terms are used and the relevance of the related concepts are so important that a reader soon appreciates the important underlying distinctions. There is

also a very useful range of different types of texts and languages, for example, English, French, German, Latin, Irish, Yiddish, Norwegian, Japanese, Greek, Hebrew, Accadian, Chinese, Bengali, Russia, and Spanish. This is not a book for beginners, but it can be of great help for people with a good linguistic background, because it explores in a systematic manner some of the most common problems of translating. Chapter 10 on zeroes is especially important since the absence of correspondence is so consistently overlooked by many teachers of translation. The Bibliography and the Index of Persons and Translation Resources are unusually valuable.

6. *Translation Studies, an Integrated Approach* by Mary Snell-Hornby (1988) is an excellent short book for any translator or teacher of translation. Chapter 1 treats translation studies as an independent discipline, and Chapter 2 focuses on translation as a cross-cultural event. Chapter 3 analyzes translation from various orientations, for example, linguistics, text analysis, speech acts, the dynamics of meaning, and interlingual relations. Chapter 4 treats translation from the wide range of "special languages" to literary translation.

This small book of only 163 pages contains an amazing amount of significant information about the principles and practice of translating, written in down-to-earth language about a wide range of constantly recurring issues. The diagram on page 89, representing the translational equivalents on page 88, is an especially effective way for dealing with types of speech acts, participant status, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. Other diagrammatic representations of this type could do a great deal to provide structured ways of imaging the relevance of various linguistic structures.

7. *Discourse and the Translator* by Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990) is an excellent treatment of eleven topics that are crucial to the theory and practice of translating: issues and debates about translation studies, important relations between theory and practice, the role of context in translating, the significance of discourse, the pragmatics of context, the semiotic dimension of context, intertextuality and intentionality, text types as a focus for translators, text structure. discourse texture, and the translator as a mediator.

The linguistic orientation of this volume is Hallidayan functional linguistics with special emphasis on socio-cultural contexts. The authors make an important distinction between actual and vir-

tual problems of translation and explain the lack of interest in linguistics by professional translators as the result of undue emphasis on formal structures rather than on meaningful relations. Language variation in the form of registers and dialects plays a major role, but the principal issues relate to the nature and role of discourses in a broad semiotic sense.

8. *Translation and Relevance* by Ernst-August Gutt (1991) is an application of relevance theory to the issues of interlingual interpretation of texts, first, in terms of style, as ways in which thoughts are expressed, and second, the related communicative clues consisting of semantic representations, syntactic properties, phonetic features, semantic constraints, formulaic expressions, onomatopoeia, the stylistic value of words, and the sound-based poetic features.

Gutt focuses primarily on the inferential nature of communication, that is, the mental faculty that enables people to communicate with one another by drawing inferences from all kinds of human behavior.

Gutt's concern is not so much with the details of interlingual communication but with offering a different approach to tricky problems. A valid definition of translation in the relevance-theoretic framework is given as "A receptor language utterance is a direct translation of a source language utterance if and only if it purposes to interpretively resemble the original completely in the context envisaged for the original," but a number of words in this definition also require further refinement and specification. This volume does not attempt to illustrate the broad range of difficulties faced by translators, but Gutt has made an important contribution to translation studies by pointing out a different theoretical approach to the issue of communicative resemblance.

9. *In Other Words* by Mona Baker (1992) is exactly what its subtitle indicates, namely, "a course-book on translation." The titles of the major chapters indicate quite clearly the linguistic Hallidayan approach to different levels and types of structures and texts: equivalence at word level, equivalence above the word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence (thematic and information structures), textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence.

This volume is particularly appropriate for students beginning to study the problems of translating. The terminology is carefully explained and consistently used to describe translators' difficulties

(there is also an excellent glossary). Many differences between languages such as English, German, Italian, and Russian are carefully noted, and distinctions between various levels of English are consistently illustrated. Semantic fields and lexical sets are explained and their relevance to translation is repeatedly indicated in a consistent manner.

The introduction of numerous translational differences between English and Arabic (the author's mother tongue) is an important plus. And suggestions for further reading occur at the end of each chapter. Mona Baker is both a linguist and a teacher.

10. *Les Fondements Socio-Linguistiques de la Traduction* by Maurice Pergnier (1993) is a delightfully written book that serves to bring the first edition of 1978 up to date. The excellent range of topics includes chapters on the general theory of language, variables in language and speech, parameters of a text, translation between languages in contact, sense and signification, linguistic and sociolinguistic points of view, idioms as sociolinguistic features, analysis and exegesis, and translation and language universals, followed by a section on conclusions and perspectives. A final annex deals with mirages and realities of certain traditional concepts that may be used to measure methods and translational equivalences (the annex is well worth the price of the book)

The French language makes it possible for Pergnier to make some important terminological distinctions, for example, between *language*, *langue* and *parole* as well as between *signe*, *signifié* and *signification*. Translation is recognized as essentially a branch of semiotics, and accordingly, translators must recognize that discourses always have more than one possible meaning. But in order to determine a possible meaning, it is essential to understand the contexts of both encoding and decoding. Although the basic theoretical distinctions are sociolinguistic and sociosemiotic, the working terminology and orientation represent essentially Saussure's basic insights.

Some of the explanations of special translation problems may seem somewhat lengthy and even overdone, but the elegance of the style and the clarity of analysis are so convincing that a reader finds the explanations to be windows for learning rather than dark academic corridors leading nowhere. Pergnier is a genius in taking a simple English statement such as I *go to school* as a means of pointing out how the context can produce several different meanings. Pergnier always distinguishes clearly between a text as a dis-

course and a text as a message.

This volume is not a textbook for classes in translating, but rather, a source of brilliant insight about the nature of language and meaning.

11. *Traducción: Historia y Teoría* by Valentín García Yebra (1994) is an unusual book by an unusual person. The first part describes in an effective way the history of translation beginning with the early Sumerians, Accadians, Hittites, Ugarites, and Egyptians and mentions especially the legend of Gilgamesh that shows up in various forms in different languages, including Hebrew. The translation of Greek literature in the education of the Romans is clearly described, but especially important is the history of translation of Greek texts into Arabic, and their later translation from Arabic into Latin for people in Western Europe.

Translations made in Spain are divided into three epochs: the reign of Juan II, the Golden age of early Spanish literature, and translations made toward the end of the 20th Century, including especially the experience of Pierre Daniel Huet and of Yebra himself, who is not only a first rate translator of Greek, Latin, German, English and French, but a prolific writer and editor. The section on theory and criticism deals with the basic concepts that must guide all translators, but especially those translating into and from other romance languages, such as French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. The last two sections on the variety of texts and translations and on the critical analysis of translation theories are particularly important, but the most interesting chapter describes Yebra's personal experience as a translator.

12. *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training* by Daniel Gile (1995) is particularly important in that it combines translating and interpreting as intimately related means for interlingual communication. Six chapters deal with both translation and interpretation but focus on various related factors: the theoretical components in training, communication and quality, fidelity, comprehension, knowledge acquisition, and literature on training. One chapter analyzes a sequential model of translation, while three chapters deal specifically with certain features of interpreting: the effort model of interpretation, coping tactics in interpretation, and language issues in conference interpreting, which in many respects also applies to translating.

On the issue of whether translators are born, rather than made, Gile rightly insists that formal training is not mandatory

but it can help individuals to fully realize their potantial, something that no one would seriously dispute. Gile also sees great practical advantages in theoretical concepts and models, and applies these aspects of translation and interpreting to issues of professional loyalty (a subject that few books treat in a serious manner), because interpreters often serve purposes that are strictly marginal or even contradictory to their personal attitudes and roles.

Gile also pays a great deal of attention to full comprehension because translators and interpreters not only need to understand the language, but in many instances must have specialized knowledge about intricate relations between various forms of the same entity or state. The chapter on coping tactics for interpretation is especially useful since it clearly reflects actual practice, for example, delaying a response, reconstructing meaning from the context, getting help from someone else in the booth. But trying to read a script and interpret simultaneously at the same time is extremely difficult, specially when speakers suddenly depart from a script to emphasize some particularly important point.

13. *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* by Gideon Toury (1995) begins with an introduction in which Toury describes the basis for Descriptive Translation Studies. This first part consists of a thorough and convincing exposition of the need for descriptive studies, as proposed by some of the earlier creative insights of Holmes. The following three parts are subdivided into twelve different chapters: that focus attention on such themes as the target culture, norms in translation, methods for descriptive studies, coupled pairs, an exemplary study of descriptive studies, a Shakespearean sonnet, indirect translation, literary organization, interim solutions, the development of a translation (Hamlet's monologue in Hebrew), translation of specific lexical items, and experimentation in translation studies.

Some excursus are particularly interesting: 1. pseudo-translations, texts that pretend to be translations, but are not, for example, the portions of the Book of Mormon that come from the King James Bible, and similarly so-called original texts that are actually translations, and 2. the procedures involved in a bilingual person becoming a translator, a study of nature vs. nurture.

Part Four is particularly important in that Toury deals with the basic issue of "Laws of Translational Behavior" as probabilistic generalizations that constitute the foundation for his focus on

Descriptive Translational Studies.

14. *Interpretation and Translation* by Elena Croitoru (1996) is designed primarily for Rumanians interested in present developments in translation studies and in learning how to handle various forms of English for different purposes, for example, English for academic purposes, English for specific purposes, and English for science and technology. The text is divided into five principal sections: 1. The interpretive processes required for effective translating, in which issues of text types, cultural input, and translational equivalence are primary considerations, 2. Translating texts representing different types of English usage (especially English for Special Purposes), 3. Discourse analysis viewed from the perspectives of cohesion, coherence, texture, and contextual elements, 4. Difficulties encountered in dealing with texts employing English for science and technology (as a way of talking about text types), 5. Translation competence in terms of communication strategies and different levels of competence in translating.

As in many practical situations language learning is combined with various aspects of translation since the learning of English is directly related to its use in translation. University programs in learning foreign languages can be justified more readily if the practical application to translating can be incorporated, even though theoretically and practically people should have a high level of language competence before they undertake to study translation principles and practices. This same problem, however, exists in a number of countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

15. *Knowledge and Skills in Translator Behavior*, Wulfram Wilss (1996) is a wide-ranging treatment of eleven different aspects of translating: translation studies in terms of scope and challenges, theoretical and empirical aspects of translation studies, translation as knowledge-based activity, context, culture, compensation, translation as meaning-based information processing (including gradience, complexity, conventionality, schematicity, economy, and predictability), the translation process and translation procedures, the role of the translator in the translation process, discourse linguistics, decision making and choice, translation teaching, and human and machine translation.

In a text of only 232 pages Wilss has included an amazing range of problems and creative suggestions, including an incisive analysis of Chomsky's failures and the recognition of the creative implications of cognitive linguistics advocated so effectively by

Langacker and others. Wilss' comments on text linguistics and translation form the core of his theoretical approach to language and translation, but his chapter on Context, Culture, and Compensation provides much of the substance that must go into the process of translating. Words and actions only have meaning in terms of linguistic and cultural contexts, and controlled compensations involve the basic adjustments required to communicate essentially the same source message in a target text.

16. *Manual de traducción, Inglés/Castellano* by Juan Gabriel, López Guix and Jacqueline Minett Wilkinson (1997) contains ten chapters on the themes of the role of translators, the philosophy of language, the genius of language and its importance for translation, different syntactic features of English and Spanish, morphological differences in English and Spanish, differences of punctuation in English and Spanish, the significance of different theories of translation, different systems for analyzing texts, translation procedures, and dictionaries and other sources of help in translating. The chapter on the philosophy of language cites almost all of the major contributors, including Bertrand Russel, Wittgenstein, Austin, Searle, Grice. Sapir, Whorf, Quine, Frege, and Coseriu. The chapter on grammar and universals seems to rely considerably on Chomsky, but the implications of transformations are largely abandoned.

The fourth and fifth chapters on differential features between English and Spanish are very well developed with a wide range of examples, and the eighth chapter on the analysis of texts is one of the most perceptive. Chapter nine concerning translation procedures is the core of the volume. This volume describes and illustrates numerous differences between Spanish and English on the basis of borrowings, traditional idioms, transpositions, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, expansion, reduction, and compensation. But as in many books on principles of translating, a reader obtains the impression that a translator translates languages, that is, develops a typology of linguistic contrasts as a means of understanding and reproducing the contents of texts. This, however, is a false concept of translating, which is not concerned with interpreting the structures of language but in reproducing the meaning of texts.

17. *My father taught me how to cry, but now I have forgotten: the semantics of religious concepts with an emphasis on meaning, interpretation, and translatability*, by Kjell Magne Yri (1998) does

not appear to be a book about translation, but it is a very remarkable study of the meanings of two sets of words representing two of the most significant concepts in religion, namely, salvation and perdition. The long history of such words and the vicissitudes of diverse meanings in a lengthy historical series of translations points very clearly to the importance of cognitive linguistics (developed by Langacker, Lakoff, and Geeraerts) as a fundamental component of any scientific approach to semantics and translation.

As a missionary Bible translator of the Scriptures into the Sidaamo Afo, a Semitic language of Ethiopia, Yri was constantly confronted with the issues of the appropriateness of two sets of diametrically opposed concepts: (1) *save*, *savior*, *salvation*, and (2) *perish*, *destroy*, *be destroyed*, that exhibit a fascinating history in which innovation occurred repeatedly in the creative use of language by one individual after another. Accordingly, Yri rejects prototype semantics that depends on social phenomena. For Yri religious language is simply human language used to talk about religious matters. Yri also has some very important observations about expert and folk categories

Terms for *salvation* are studied first in their contexts of the Hebrew Bible, then in Classical Greek and in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible into Hellenistic Greek. The next stage is the use of these terms in the Greek New Testament, followed by developments in the Latin Vulgate, and for Yri's own background and that of other Norwegian missionaries in Ethiopia, namely, the rendering of these same concepts in Old Norse as well as in modern Norwegian. But the story must also include the special problems of correspondence in Sidaamu Afo, in which the metaphorical meaning of forgiveness is dominant.

The Hebrew words for *loss*, *perdition*, *destruction* are also traced through the long line of figurative meanings, and each stage of development is summarized by some excellent diagrams that indicate historical developments and degrees of semantic sameness by the thickness of lines enclosing different semantic domains. Yri also has some very valuable comments on the role of interpretation in translation, especially individual versus so-called objective meaning.

Yri contends that so-called "lexical meaning" is a linguistic illusion abstracted from communicative intension and interpretation. Accordingly, it is largely irrelevant to talk about the "same

concept" in the source text and in the target text. The book ends with a definition of language in relation to translation: "language is the composite internal neural enterprise that enables one individual to communicate with another," to which he should probably have added "by means of oral sounds."

For beginning translators who would like to read some of the above books as a help to understanding more about translating, I would recommend starting with the following series, listed by authors and beginning with books that are likely to be more easily understood: Mary Snell-Hornby, Mona Baker, Valentin Garcia Yebra, and DanielGile.

Even a rapid glance at the above brief descriptions of various treatments of translating will soon reveal that despite considerable differences in vocabulary, the essential elements in translating and interpreting are very much the same, namely, an accurate understanding of the source text and an effective representation of the meaning in another language. Any one of the above statements of principles and procedures in interlingual communication can be the basis for satisfactory translating. And on the basis of such books a number of teachers have had real success in helping students to understand texts more thoroughly and to reproduce their meaning effectively.

In some of these discussions of the underlying principles and practices of translating, there is, however, a constantly recurring failure, namely, the treatment of translating as essentially a matter of translating languages rather than translating texts. No one says so specifically, but the implication is that translators need to have a broad understanding of the structures of the respective languages in order to understand what is happening in the processes of translating.

This intrusion of linguistics and sociolinguistics into the theory and practice of translating is the direct result of the fact that so many persons without an adequate knowledge of their A, B, and C languages want to learn how to translate. And in order to help such students, teachers have turned to linguistics, sociolinguistics, and even to sociosemiotics as a means of helping students understand some of the broader implications of what translating involves. As a result, teachers are required to teach languages and translating at the same time, when they ought to concentrate first on language learning by using the most modern and effective techniques and then on teaching translating, in which the focus can

and should be on texts. Then translating becomes more and more like writing in one's own mother tongue. In fact, translating is nothing more than understanding correctly the meaning of a text and then reproducing this meaning in another language in such a manner that the stylistic features of the source text are adequately represented directly or indirectly.

I have great personal sympathy for teachers of translation who must try to do the impossible, namely, endeavor to teach translating to people who do not know the respective languages thoroughly. Unfortunately, most secondary and university programs do not teach languages, but teach about languages. For example, when I first visited Belgium some fifty years ago, I knew all the irregular forms of the French verb system, but I did not know how to exchange dollars for Belgian francs.

Instead of books that combine a study of linguistic structures and translating principles, what translators need most is a discovery procedure that will enable them to determine the meaning, the meanings, or the non-meaning of a text on the basis of relevant contexts. Such a procedure would concentrate attention on what concerns translators most directly and practically. Such a course would simply make explicit what expert translators constantly do in the process of translating.

Perhaps some of the following statements about becoming a translator may be of help:

## A. Learning to translate

1. Acquire excellent competence in one or more foreign languages. Unfortunately many foreign language programs in universities focus on learning about languages rather than learning to understand and effectively speak and/or write such languages. Special language-learning programs, such as the Goethe Institutes, are expensive, and as a result students wishing to learn a language often apply to government sponsored programs teaching translating and interpreting. Ideally, most such institutes should dedicate the first two-thirds of the program to intensive language learning and then introduce techniques of translating and interpreting for the final period, but educational authorities in some countries are still unaware of what can and should be done to improve foreign language efficiency.
2. Analyze the meaning of a source text on the basis of concepts

rather than the meanings of particular words because the concepts are the units that must form the basis for finding equivalent expressions in the receptor language. Since many documents are poorly written, it may be useful to rewrite certain portions of a text in order to ascertain more accurately what the original writers had in mind, especially if it seems clear that the persons preparing a text do not have an adequate grasp of the language in which they are writing.

3. Pay close attention to stylistic features of a source text since these so often reveal the subtle associative (connotative) values being communicated by the writer.

4. Translate a text only after having clearly understood its designative and associative meanings. This makes translating essentially a process of writing, in which the selection and arrangement of words is done more or less automatically.

5. Improve the style of a translation by reading it over out-loud (even several times for some texts). Ears are much more sensitive to stylistic features than eyes, since human beings have been hearing languages for hundreds of thousands of years, but have been reading them for only a few thousand.

6. Try to translate texts in which you have adequate background knowledge or keen interest. Nevertheless, extending the range of competence can be an interesting and personally rewarding challenge.

7. Since translating is essentially an interlingual skill, competence increases rapidly with practice, especially if there are sources of help in dealing with special problems, for example, teachers in schools of translation, directors of agencies responsible for translation services, local societies of translators who often meet on a monthly basis to discuss common problems, and personal friends who are sensitive to problems of verbal communication.

8. If possible, become an in-house translator of an organization in which there are different teams of translators working in different sets of languages, for example, German-Arabic, English-Chinese, and French-Russian and in different areas of technical specialization, for example, computer technology, merchandising, industrialization, law, and medicine. Such programs provide unparalleled opportunities to learn.

9. Gradually formulate your own set of principles and procedures of translating and share these insights with others.

## B. Teaching translation

1. Have plenty of personal experience in translating so that advice and help to students will be genuine and realistic. Never try to teach a skill in which you yourself are not competent.
2. Go over assigned texts with students and show them how to spot problems and anticipate solutions. Psychologically this is a great advantage for teachers, since it shows students that teachers really want to be helpful rather than merely judgmental.
3. Texts assigned for translation by students should be about recent events or ideas and should be long enough for students to find most of the answers from the contexts.
4. Teach students how to correct badly written texts as a kind of intralingual type of translating. Professional translators are constantly required to correct poorly written texts, and students need to learn how to treat such problems by dealing realistically with what they must frequently do professionally.
5. Spend at least half of each translation session pointing out creative solutions made by students. Unfortunately, too many teachers spend entire class hours finding fault with what students have done. Such a procedure is both frustrating and largely ineffective, because people do not like to remember their mistakes but will remember their successes very positively.
6. From time to time encourage students to work together in groups of three or four on a joint translation. Talking about the meaning of a text is an excellent approach to seeing multiple possibilities of meaning.
7. Distinguish clearly between traditional principles and actual practice of translating by studying translations made by professional translators in terms of (1) differences in form and content, (2) evident reasons for such differences, and (3) the validity of the differences in terms of effective communication.
8. Teach students how to analyze and grade each other's translations. Students usually pay much more attention to the judgments of school mates than to teachers, and different judgments can form the basis for realistic evaluation of principles.
9. Undertake commercial translating. Most people learn much more from the real world than from the academic world. Money is much more convincing than grades.

Chapter 7

# Three Major Types of Translation Theories

As yet there is no one generally accepted theory of translation in the technical sense of "a coherent set of general propositions used as principles to explain a class of phenomena," but there are several theories in the broad sense of "a set of principles that are helpful in understanding the nature of translating or in establishing criteria for evaluating a particular translated text." In general, however, these principles are stated in terms of how to produce an acceptable translation.

The lack of a fully acceptable theory of translation should not come as a surprise, because translating is essentially a very complex phenomenon, and insights concerning this interlingual activity are derived from several different disciplines, for example, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, communication theory, literary criticism, aesthetics, and sociosemiotics. The fact that there is no generally accepted theory for any one of these behavioral disciplines should be a sufficient reason for people to realize that there is nothing basically inadequate about translating simply because those who translate cannot always explain by means of some comprehensive theory precisely why they do what they do.

The various sets of principles and rules about translating can be helpfully discussed in terms of historical developments, which Snell-Hornby (1988) has done very succinctly and effectively, or these principles may be discussed in terms of various disciplines that have significantly influenced the ways in which translators and interpreters have proceeded to do their work. The formulation of theories of translation has taken place primarily in the Western world and in China, where an ancient tradition of faithfulness, smoothness, and elegance was recognized as additive, not competitive.

The ancient Romans discussed at length the principles of translation embodied in the translation of Greek literature into Latin, and during the Middle Ages a great deal of translating took place in the Arab world where the ancient Latin and Greek

manuscripts were translating into Arabic, many of which were in turn translated into Latin for the sake of people living in Western Europe during the Renaissance.

There are, however, certain difficulties involved in trying to discuss translation theories on a strictly historical basis. In many instances the differences about principles of translation only reflect changing fashions about literature, and in some instances heated arguments about how to translate seem to reflect little more than personal prejudices and literary rivalries.

Too often the differences in theories of translation depend on extreme positions, for example, the contention by Ortega y Gasset (1937) and Croce (1955) that translation is really impossible. Mounin (1963) has shown how marginal such discussions have been, and Güttinger (1963) has remarked about how inconsistent such authors have been in wanting to have their writings translated.

Because the Bible or at least portions of it, have been translated for a longer period of time and into more languages (2,233 as of the beginning of the year 2000), it is not strange that some of the conflicts about principles of translation have focused on how one can legitimately translate a book that is regarded as divinely inspired. The answer to this problem in the Arab world was to decide that the Koran should not be translated, and as a result most translations of the Koran have been done by non-Muslims. In Christianity, however, translating flourished in the first few centuries (including Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Old Church Slavonic, Gothic, and Georgian) and again during the Reformation, but the arguments about literal or free translations reflected theological presuppositions more than linguistic concerns.

Jerome was in serious trouble for having rendered the Bible into ordinary Latin (the Biblia Vulgata), and Luther had to defend his views of translating into the every-day language of the Gernan people. But in many respects his views about translating had a major influence on freeing local languages in Europe from the heavy hand of ecclesiastical Latin. Campbell (1789) defined and illustrated a number of basic principles of translation in an introduction to his own English translation of the Four Gospels, and these principles were apparently expropriated by Tytler (1790) in a volume that is still cited as having made a major contribution to the theory of translating.

Despite several important recent contributions to the princi-

ples of translation by those concerned with Bible translating, the actual practice of such translating has often been far less innovative and creative than the translations of the Greek and Latin Classics in the Loeb series because over-riding theological concerns often prevented more creative and meaningful sets of correspondences.

A more useful approach to the study of the diversity of translation theories is to group together variously related theories on the basis of the disciplines that have served as the basic points of reference for some of the primary insights: 1. philology, although often spoken of as "literary criticism" or "literary analysis," 2. linguistics, and especially sociolinguistics (language used in communication), and 3. semiotics, particularly socio-semiotics, the study of sign systems used in human communication. This order of disciplines reflects a somewhat historical development, but each of these orientations in translating is endorsed and favored by a number of present-day scholars. At the same time it is important to recognize some of the important contributions being made to translation by other related disciplines, for example, psychology, information theory, informatics, and sociology.

There are, however, two fundamental problems in practically all approaches to theories of translating: (1) the tendency for advocates of a particular theory to build their theory on a specific discipline and often on its applicability to a single literary genre or type of discourse and (2) the primary or exclusive concern for designative (denotative) rather than associative (connotative) meanings. This is particularly true of those theories of translation that depend on some form of propositional logic to provide the categories for establishing equivalence, degrees of similarity, and acceptability.

## 7.1 *Theories based on philological insights*

Philology, the study and evaluation of written texts, including their authenticity, form, meaning, and cultural influence, has for more than 2000 years been the primary basis for discussing translation theories and practice. In general such texts have been literary productions because they seemed to be the only texts that warranted being translated into other languages.

In the Classical Roman world Cicero, Horace, Catullus, and Quintilian discussed primarily the issues of literal vs. free translat-

ing. Was a translator justified in rendering the sense of a passage at the expense of the formal features of word order and grammatical constructions? Also, should a choice metaphor be sacrificed for the sake of making sense of a passage? For the most part, Roman writers opted for freedom in translating, but the practice of translating and concern for principles of effective interlingual communication largely died out during the early Middle Ages.

With the intellectual explosion of the Renaissance *Les Belles Infideles* "the beautiful unfaithful ones" dominated the new trend in translating the Classics into the vernacular languages of Europe. And although Cowley's translation of Pindar's Odes (1656) was by no means an extreme example of freedom in translating, Cowley was strongly criticized by Dryden (1680), who proposed a theory of translating based on three major types: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. By metaphrase Dryden meant a literal, word-for-word rendering of a text, and by imitation he meant radical departures, including additions and reinterpretations. Accordingly, paraphrase was designed to represent the logical compromise between rigid word-for-word renderings and unlimited departures from an original.

In this triple approach to problems of translating literary texts, Dryden was supported by Pope (1715), but more than a century later Matthew Arnold (1862) reacted against Dryden's position and insisted on preserving the form of an original, even though the spirit and the meaning of the text were both likely to suffer. In order to illustrate the significance of his theory, Arnold translated the *Iliad* and the *Odessey* into English hexameters. Because such attempts at literal translating proved largely unacceptable, some philologists insisted that translating is simply impossible. Nevertheless, the position of Arnold, as well as the support of a number of theologians, resulted in the translation of the Revised Version of the Bible (1985), to be followed by the American Standard Version of 1901, that largely dominated Bible translating in major languages for more than fifty years.

Beginning with the twentieth century, philology experienced an infusion of new life through the recognition of insights to be gained from linguistics, especially from Russian structuralists, the Prague school, British functionalism, and anthropological linguistics in the United States. The focus of philology shifted from formal features of particular literary texts to the role of language as a code, a system for communication, and an integral part of cul-

ture. This new orientation as it relates directly to translation is well illustrated in the volumes on translation by Brower (1959), Steiner (1975) and Fowler (1977).

Perhaps the most important contribution of linguistics to philology has been in the area of text linguistics, the study of how texts are organized formally and thematically into a number of distinct types, often called "genres," for example, narratives, conversations, discourses, arguments, jokes, riddles, genealogies, sermons, lectures and lyric poetry. Some of the principal contributions to text linguistics have come from such scholars as Jakobson (1960), Halliday (1970), van Dijk (1975) and Beaugrande and Dressler (1981).

In the twentieth century philology has also been influenced by a number of French existentialist semioticians, especially Lévi Strauss (1951), Greimas (1966), Barthes (1966), and Derrida (1981). The result of this contribution to philology has been the acceptance by many persons of the separation of a text from the context out of which it has developed. Every literary text is thought to have a life its own (a kind of autonomous existence) and its interpretation need not be related to the setting out of which it arose. This approach means that interpretation depends totally upon what the reader of such a text reads into it. This orientation has resulted in some extreme views about translating, but semioticians such as Pierce, Jakobson, Eco, and Sebeok insist that a legitimate interpretation of a text cannot take place apart from the total setting of both language and culture.

## 7.2 Theories based on linguistic insights

Several scholars have approached the issues of translating from the viewpoints of linguistic differences between source and target texts. Some of the more important contributions include Vinay and Darbelnet's comparative analysis of French and English as a basis for a method of translating (1958), Catford's volume, *A Linguistic Theory of Translating* (1965), Toury's book *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (1980), Larson's textbook *Meaning-based Translation* (1984), and Malone's transformational-generative approach *The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation* (1988).

As in the case of the philological orientation to translating, linguistic theories have also been influenced and enriched by a

number of developments, including cultural anthropology, philosophical approaches to semantics, information and communication theories, computational linguistics, machine translation, artificial intelligence, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics.

A major set of insights for translating have been derived from the study of lexical semantics by linguists involved in cultural anthropology, for example, Goodnough's work on Trukese semantic categories (1951), Lounsbury's analysis of the Pawnee kinship system (1956), the description of key semantic domains in Hopi by C. F. and F. M. Voegelin (1957), and Conklin's work in botanical taxonomies (1962). Many of these insights have been summarized and enlarge by Weinreich (1966) and Lehrer (1974). The cultural dimension in translating forms a major component in publications by Nida (1964, 1975), Nida and Taber (1969), and Snell-hornby (1988), who entitles one chapter "Translation as a Cross-cultural Event."

Philosophers interested in their distinctive types of linguistic analysis have made primary use of various forms of propositional logic to define meanings on the basis of certain distinctive distributions. Katz and Fodor (1963) attempted to construct a semantic theory based on binary sets of distinctive features in order to treat semantics as essentially a projection of transformational-generative grammar. Bolinger (1965), however, showed how impossible this is in view of the fuzzy boundaries of meaning and the overlapping domains.

Snell-Hornby (1988) has effectively described how a number of translation theorists in Germany pushed the idea of equivalence to the point of insisting that semantic differences can and should be rigorously distinguished. In fact they went so far as to insist that true translating can only apply to nonliterary or nonfigurative texts, since they considered literary texts as structurally marginal uses of language. Fortunately, Newmark (1981) has never hesitated to say bluntly what many others have thought, namely, that when a theory becomes so arbitrary or restricted as to exclude some of the most creative and meaningful aspects of language, it is essentially useless.

Information theory, as formulated primarily by Wiener (1948, 1954) and Shannon and Weaver (1949) has had a very useful role in helping translators recognize the functions of redundancy. Communication theory, which is an enlargement of information theory, has helped translators see the importance of all the

many factors that enter into interlingual communication: source, target, transmission, noise (physical and psychological), setting, and feedback (immediate and anticipatory). Computational linguistics is especially rewarding as it clarifies and systematizes lexical and syntactic properties of language.

Communication theory has had considerable influence on the work of Kade (1968) and Neubert (1968), and especially on the insightful studies of Reiss (1972, 1976), whose breadth of approach has been unusually effective.

Research in machine translating has also helped translators appreciate more fully the striking differences between the routine correspondences between texts and those that require creative innovation. In Wilss' volume *The Science of Translation* (1982) communication theory and machine translation figure prominently.

The linguistic orientation in translating has been especially enlarged by work in sociolinguistics, in which the emphasis is not on language as a structure but on the role of language as used by speakers and writers. Sociolinguistics has called attention to the function of levels and registers in language, linguistic dialects, the roles of power and solidarity in language usage and in the systematic character of what some linguists in the past have treated as mere accidental variation. For translators the research of Labov (1966), Hymes (1974) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are particularly significant.

## 7.3 Theories based on sociosemiotics

The most pervasive and crucial contribution to an understanding of translation is to be found in sociosemiotics, the discipline that treats all the systems of signs used by human societies. The great advantage of semiotics over other approaches to interlingual communication is that it deals with all types of codes and signs. No holistic approach to translating can exclude semiotics as a fundamental discipline in encoding and decoding signs.

Semiotics is as old as the writings of Plato and Aristotle, but its present-day formulations depend in large measure on the unusual insights of Peirce (1934), the systematization of these in Eco (1979), and the practical implications of these in Sebeok (1976, 1986).

One distinct advantage of a semiotic approach to meaning is the equal attention that must be given to designative and associa-

tive meanings, because signs of all types must be understood in terms of all the other verbal signs within a text or in related texts. This focus has been particularly significant in de Beaugrande's treatments of poetic translating (1978) and in his article on schemas for literary communication (1987). Paul Friedrich has also provided important insights in his volume *The Language Parallax: Linguistic Relativism and Poetic Indeterminacy* (1986), which effectively illustrates the indeterminacy of ordinary speech and of poetic language. As an anthropologist, linguist, and poet, Friedrich is in an unusually strategic position to deal with linguistic relativism and poetic indeterminacy, with which the professional translator must wrestle each day. The continuum of order to chaos is the ultimate challenge to communication.

For an increasing number of sociologists, for example, Geertz, Sperber, and Mary Douglas, knowledge is essentially a semiotic of culture, and life is a semiotic experience, whether on the level of DNA and RNA or on the level of awe in watching a majestic aurora borealis. Because translators are constantly required to communicate knowledge and experience by means of symbols that involve varying degrees of distortion, they may find Hofstadter's concept of isomorphs helpful in dealing with problems of information preserving and information altering symbols.

As noted in Chapter 2, Wittgenstein's view of language use as essentially a game in which the parties negotiate for personal or collective advantage may provide important insight about ways of avoiding dull compromises and of finding fresh ways to express equivalences. Game theory seems to be a useful concept for translators, because language both reveals and hides, because there are always sociosemiotic factors that involved various degrees of parallax. Game theory highlights the sociological functions of language in establishing and maintaining a person's status and roles in society. This means saying the right thing at the right time to the right persons in order to maximize power and solidarity.

Game theory seems to be especially applicable to some types of literature and especially to detective stories, in which the author and readers play a constant game in trying to reveal and at the same time to hide the identity of the perpetrator of a crime. In a novel the author reveals just enough to increase constantly the reader's interest until the climax of the story is reached, at which time crucial decisions and actions resolve the crisis and a new steady state results. In good expository writing an author always

tries to anticipate objections from readers and in this way negotiates for a significant advantage, while lively conversations are also an excellent example of negotiating for effective presentation and acceptance of a particular set of ideas.

Undoubtedly, one of the most effective means of learning how to translate involves a close study of what expert translators have done. A few hours of detailed investigation of the following translations and underlying texts can do a great deal to open new vistas to the nature and practice of translating: the dramas of Aristophanes by B. B. Rogers in the Loeb Classical Library, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and translated by Gregory Rabassa (Avon Books), *The Name of the Rose*, by Umberto Eco and translated by William Weaver (Warner Books), *Night Flight* by Antoine de Saint-Expery translated by Stuart Gilbert, and anyone of a series of articles in German published in *Dimensions* and translated by A. Leslie Willson.

Translators will also find fascinating insights about translating in the journal *Translation Review*, published by the University of Texas at Dallas. Each issue highlights the experience of some outstanding translator who shares, usually in the form of an interview, his or her philosophy of language and important principles of translation. This hands-on approach to the successes and failures in translating is extremely helpful, because theories are always chasing practice in order to explain what has already been discovered.

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# Index

# An Interview with the correspondent of the Journal of Foreign Languages

**JFL**: Some people say that your theories concerning translating are built on your experience gained in translating the *Bible*. What do you think about such statements?

**Nida**: I can well understand why people would think this, but in fact my basic principles about translation developed long before I worked with Bible translators. On the basis of my studies in the *Classics* at UCLA I was amazed to find that for the most part the Greek and Latin authors had been much more intelligibly translated than the *Bible*. Furthermore, my professors refused to have us produce literal translations since in their judgment such translations would inevitably result in students' failing to appreciate the style of the Greek and Latin texts. In addition, literal translations also result in bad habits in writing one's own language. My graduate work in Patristics at the University of Southern California and later doctoral studies at the University of Michigan in linguistics and cultural anthropology further convinced me that for the most part Bible translating falls far behind other translating in intelligibility of content and acceptability of style.

After being asked by the American Bible Society to give assistance to Bible translators in many different parts of the world, I quite naturally employed illustrative data from the Scriptures since these would be much more convincing and helpful, but the basic principles of accurate representation of form and content were developed considerably before my work with Bible translators.

**JFL**: Arguments have gone on for decades between two schools of thought: those who insist that translating is an art and those who are equally convinced that it is a science. How would you comment on these arguments?

**Nida**: It is certainly true that translators need an artistic sense of stylistic appropriateness if they are required to translate a text with complex aesthetic forms. To some extent they need to approximate the stylistic sensitivity of the original writer if they are to do full justice to the task, but that does not make translation an art. Similarly, because some technical texts require a good deal of scientific background, information does not make translating a

science. The basic problem in such discussions is the fact that people fail to distinguish between the actual process of translating and the study of translating as a branch of human activity. The actual translating of a text reflects a highly developed skill, but the study of translating as a type of human activity can, of course, be done in a scientific manner.

The fact that translating can be done, although often in an inadequate manner, by almost any bilingual person indicates clearly that the process of translating is essentially a skill, which of course can be greatly improved by experience and training. But until neuophysiologists can give us much more information than we now have about mental operations, we need to be cautious about making translating into a science. In reality it is a technology because it produces a product and calls on a number of disciplines, for example, philology, communication theory, cultural anthropology, linguistics, sociosemiotics, and psychology, to help us understand how this bilingual skill can produce such outstanding examples of equivalence in form and content.

**JFL**: How are your linguistic studies associated with your translation research and practice?

**Nida**: As an undergraduate I was fascinated by developments in linguistics and practically memorized Bloomfield's volume *on Language*. I was similarly impressed by Sapir's work on Southern Paiute and his fascinating book *Language*, which underlined the importance of cultural anthropology in all translating. After completing my dissertation on English syntax, I then did work on the structure of words (*Morphology, the Descriptive Analysis of Words*), since such a study seemed to be particularly important for translators working in so many different language families. This work in lexical semantics was extended in *Componential Analysis of Meaning*. My latest work in linguistics has been in the field of syntax and discourse structure. In a sense I am much more a linguist than a translatologist, although I am very much concerned with verbal communication, especially between diverse cultures and languages.

**JFL**: Some people insist that translation can only be learned through practice. They believe that theories of translation hold little water. How would you comment on such views?

**Nida**: It certainly is true that one cannot become a good translator without translating, even as a person cannot become a good swim-

mer without getting into the water. But theories should be built on practice, but many statements about the theory of translation are highly abstract and loaded down with irrelevant terminology. Without examples of precisely what is meant by general principles couched in academic language, it is no wonder that students become disappointed with statements on translation theory. Accordingly, I am sympathetic with those who find little or no help in books on translatology. If a person clearly understands a process, it can always be described in simple words. Too often big words are employed to hide failures in understanding.

**JFL**: Scholars in China are working to build translatology, which would include such subjects as the nature of translating, the objectives of translation, the process of translating, standards of translating, and translating as a branch of science. What do you think of such views?

**Nide**: There is always something positive to be gained from investigating all aspects of any human activity, but there is a fundamental difference between translating as a process and the study of translating as a branch of human endeavor. As I have already noted, translating is essentially a skill because it directly or indirectly calls on various disciplines to help produce a product. This clearly makes translating a technology, but the role of translating within a language-culture can certainly be the object of scientific investigation. Too many persons are not, however, conscious of some of these basic distinctions. Let me point out an important distinction. For example, bridge building cannot be regarded as a separate science, even though the knowledge required to design and build bridges depends on a number of scientific disciplines. Bridge building is, however, a technology, an application of various scientific concepts that make possible some of the truly magnificent structures in modern as well as ancient times.

**JFL**: How would you predict the future of doing translating by computers?

**Nida**: Already a great deal of translating is being done by computers, and the results are in many cases very acceptable provided the computer program is adequate and the text is more or less routine in content as well as in vocabulary and grammar. But what makes a text unacceptable to machine translating is the awkwardness and inconsistencies in content and style. What stymies a computer most is the poor writing that is fed into the computer. Garbage in

and Garbage out.

As data bases are expanded and computer programs are refined, there are tremendous opportunities for the use of computers, especially in assisting translators with readily accessible examples of word usage. But even more important for translators is the capacity to form their own "memory systems" for specialized vocabulary idioms, and stylistic devices.

**JFL**: Most people agree with you in combining language and culture in the process of translating. Culture, however, is so complex that people find it difficult to master. What would you advise Chinese students to do in this respect?

**Nida**: People readily recognize that it takes several years to master a language, but they assume that somehow they can learn a culture in much less time. This is simply not true. In fact, cultures are far more complex than languages. One can, for example, learn a language in five years of arduous study and proper language exposure, but it takes at least 20 years to become adequately acquainted with a culture.

A failure to capture some of the fundamental elements in a foreign culture stems largely from the fact that people have no mental framework into which various traits of a culture can fit. They need some systematic exposure to the structures of culture as described in various ethnographies that deal with the physical, physiological, social, ideological, and aesthetic features of a culture. With some basic understanding of various aspects of culture and how these fit together to produce both the practices and underlying values, people can make rapid progress in watching videos of popular programs, in studying the myths and proverbs of a society, and in reading perceptive novels and short stories that usually highlight more meaningful beliefs and practices than the majority of ethnographic journals.

**JFL**: Since every language is associated with one particular culture, don't people consider it possible to translate from one language to another without losing much of its cultural distinctiveness. What do you think of this view?

**Nida**: It is true that many people believe that words carry along the cultural content since they are supposed to reflect the culture, but matching words does not mean matching cultures. In fact, one translator felt quite confident about using the local West African term Satani as the transcription for the name Satan, another name

for the Devil. It was only some years later that he discovered that the local Satani was the culture hero of the tribe.

The truth is that cultural distinctiveness clings very close to words. In fact, the cultural contexts of words are the keys to understanding the meanings of texts, even as the syntagmatic verbal contexts of words are the keys to understanding the meanings of words in a source text. Petitions coming to the European Community from various countries in Latin America regularly speak about cooperacion economica, literally "economic cooperation", but this Spainish phrase is only a coded expression for "economic assistance" or "financial help", and this is precisely how the phrase is rendered by translators in the Commission. Petitioners in Latin America are reluctant to speak directly about financial help since this might give the impression that the economic and political institutions of their respective countries are inadequate. Accordingly, those asking for help use euphemistic expressions, but neither party is misled or deceived by this kind of linguistic legerdemain.

**JFL**: Could you give us a brief account of the latest developments in translation studies and practice in Europe and America?

**Nida**: I could give you an account of such developments, but it would not be a brief one. Too much is going on, so much is being written, and there seems no end to the conferences on translating theory and practice. In fact, it seems to me that translatologists are plowing the field of translating time and time again but new insights are few and far-between.

In the Commission of the European Community a very important change in the role of translators has taken place. No longer can requesters respond to translators' questions about the meaning of a text by saying, "You don't have to understand the text, just translate it!" Requesters must submit with any document all the relevant documentation to justify the claims in the document. Furthermore, they must indicate the persons to whom the document is addressed and the probable use to be made of the document. Translators can then determine the relative priorities in type and timing of the translation process. Some documents can simply be handled by computers or free-lance translators, but others need to be given careful attention by in-house translators because they are strategic for high-level consultations or for the resolution of different interpretation of existing documents. This restructuring of the role of translators is the principal reason for the outstanding quality in the more or less million pages translated each year into

eleven languages, although within a few years there will probably be as many as twenty languages.

For developments in the field of translatology I am very impressed with what is happening in various schools in Hong Kong, where the extreme financial and cultural pressures are producing some of the most creative solutions to issues of multilingualism and culture change. Hong Kong is undoubtedly the world's most remarkable melting pot of linguistic and cultural differences.

**JFL**: Some of the English Classics have been translated again and again into Chinese, and people have different views on this phenomenon. Is this true of other languages? What do you think of retranslating?

**Nida**: Retranslating of the Greek and Latin Classics into English is common. In fact, there are at least ten different translations of most ancient Greek dramas. Not only do receptor languages constantly change, but new insights about meaning and new fashions about translational adequacy inevitably result in retranslating, because no translation is ever perfect. The principle of the Bible Societies is that a translation needs to be revised at least every 50 years because changes in meaning, studies in hermeneutics, and greater insights into cultural correspondences make such retranslating not only advantageous but also essential.

**JFL**: Is it legitimate for us to regard your theory of "dynamic equivalence" as achieving harmony in language and culture?

**Nida**: I sincerely wish that "dynamic equivalence" could resolve such differences, but it is only a step in the right direction. My ultimate purpose is to present translation in the framework of two interacting symbolic systems: language and culture, in which all the elements carry meaning. Accordingly, we must not only look to the meaning of words but to the meaning of the cultural elements referred to by such words. There will, however, never be complete harmony because changes in language and changes in culture do not always go hand in hand. In fact, language usually lags far behind, as is so evident in talking about *grammatical possession in* his car, his wife, his father, his arrival, his punishment, his death, and his boss. In fact, most of our traditional grammatical terminology is seriously misleading.

**JFL**: What do you think of the translation seminar held at SISU and your trip to China this time?

**Nida**: I am delighted with what I have seen. The interest of stu-

dents and faculty in real issues rather than in administrative turmoil is encouraging. The commitment of government to language and translation is clearly a plus, and with enlarged economic opportunities the strategy of effective oral and written communication will rapidly increase. My only concern is that some of the best minds and most competent linguists find so much better pay in business than in academia. This certainly needs to be changed because only the best people are precisely the ones who can raise up a generation of exceptional scholars.

I have felt, however, that a conference should have a series of four or five major presentations on the same theme, with each presentation to be followed a few hours later and in a different setting so that people will feel free to challenge, debate, and discover new insights. Because of the traditional high regard for professional status the classroom is usually not culturally conductive to the free flow of different ideas.

# An Interview with Professor Liao Qiyi

**Liao**: *In one of your most important works, Theory and Practice of Translation, you defined translation as "producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style." With the development of translation studies, do you think your definiton of translation* 30 *years ago is still representative or does it need to be modified?*

**Nida**: If people understand translating in the usual sense, they normally agree that a translation should conform to or accurately represent the content of the source text and in so far as possible should also reflect the form, but if something has to be lost, it should normally be the form and not the content. I do not go along with Derrida and others who regard any printed text as public property to be understood and translated as people may prefer. That certainly is not the usual interpretation of valid translation principles nor does it reflect the normal interpretation of copyrights.

**Liao**: Dr. Nida, you have said that there are four approaches to translation in the western world: philological, linguistic, communication, and socio-semiotic. Your classification seems quite different from that of Edwin Gentzler, who classifies translation theory into American Workshop, Science of Translation, Early Translation Studies, Polysystem Theory and Deconstruction. Could you comment on Gentzler's classification and illustrate the differences?

**Nida**: Gentzler's classification seems to follow a more historical sequence, and I have tried to combine different orientation in communication together with historical factors, but any process as complex as translating can be relevantly discussed on the basis of quite different orientations. All attempts to describe highly complex phenomena involve considerable overlapping and structural distortion. Perhaps the most significant difference is between the traditional philological orientation and a more modern approach based on semiotic insights, but both of these orientations involve communication theory. Accordingly, I do not think that much is gained by trying to follow rigidly any particulary approach to

overlapping structures and points of view.

**Liao**: You are one of the most important figures of the school of "Science of Translation" and your kernel sentences and back transformations are well known in the circle of translation studies. Your functional equivalence however, focuses on the receptor's rather than the linguistic features or structures of the language. Is this a discrepancy as some translation scholars have pointed out, or a logical development of your ideas about translation?

**Nida**: Translating can be studied from various perspective: the background of the author of a text, the linguistic orientation of the translator, the underlying principles employed by the translator, the validity of the translation in terms of the way in which receptors have understood and appreciated it. All of these orientations are valid, as is always the case when evaluating the form and effectiveness of any communication. My orientation to any complex phenomenon is basically eclectic, since I do not believe in the superiority of any one approach to the treatment of complex phenomena. Different analytical techniques must always be complementary, since nothing complex can be satisfactorily studied without supplementary insights.

**Liao**: *Peter Newmark thinks that equivalent effect is not relevant in translating some types of text, for example, the text of expressive function. It seems that you do not agree on the point. Could you illustrate your idea of translating the text of expressive function?*

**Nida**: I am always interested in what Peter Newmark has to say because I admire his insights and his academic honesty. But surely the reactions of receptors are especially important in the case of expressive language. Compare, for example, *Heavens*! *Damn it*! and *Go to hell*! How readers interpret such expressions in different types of texts and at different points within a text are surely an issue in expressive function.

**Liao**: *Humbolt, Schleiermacher and Whorf all advocated that "we think the way we think because we speak the way we speak," which implies that the language of a nation is its spirit, and the spirit of a nation is its language. This concept, at the same time suggests that the language of a nation could hardly be translated into another language. Obviously, this does not agree with your belief that "anything that can be said in one language can be said in another." What do you think about the relationship between the spirit of a nation and its language?*

**Nida**: If by "spirit" you are referring to the underlying presuppositions of a culture, I cannot agree. People can understand the presuppositions of people who speak a different language and live in conformity with the value systems of different culture. In fact the differences are so obvious that people in one language-culture start shooting at people in another language-culture. They understand each other all too well.

Whorf's ideas about language and culture developed principally as the result of his research on Hopi, which is one of the languages in the large Uto-Aztecan family. I spent considerable time in the Hopi area checking on features of language and the translation of the Epistles of St. Paul, some of the most difficult language in the Bible, but I found nothing like Whorf's thesis. Furthermore, my work in other languages of the same family failed to produce anything like Whorf's views. Other linguists have also studied Hopi and their judgments are essentially the same as mine. I am afraid that Whorf simply found what he was looking for — the principal danger in all research.

I have also worked with translators in more than 200 languages and have explored with them the problems of functional equivalence in meaning. We have never found anything so distinctive about a language that we could not translate highly complex texts from one language into another. But this may require marginal notes.

**Liao:** *New translation theories in the western world have greatly changed people's understanding of translation. The parallel studies of post colonialism, women's studies, and translation seem to free translators from the subordinate or servant status. Do you think it is a positive trend in translation studies?*

**Nida:** Yes indeed. The demand for fully competent translators is much greater than the supply. When translators can earn more than $ 100,000 a year, their status will of course change radically. But this means that such translators must be highly competent and in a field that is expanding rapidly. For example, the Commission of the European Union frequently arranges for an examination of potential translators and out of more than 10,000 applicants, fully 5,000 do not have adequate experience to take the examination, and of those who do take the exam those who are actually qualified are normally less than 10.

Some persons object to publishing texts with translators' footnotes, but this is one of the really helpful ways in which differ-

ences in language-culture can be made more evident and provide a better basis for understanding some of the underlying presuppositions in the respective language-cultures.

**Liao**: *Lawrence Venuti once said, "the international sway of English coincides with the marginality of translation in contemporary Anglo-American culture." Translations issued by British and American publisher (about* 2 *percent) are much lower than* 6 *percent in Japan,* 10 *percent in France,* 14 *percent in Hungary,* 15 *percent in Germany,* 25 *percent in Italy. Would you please comment on the reasons and the consequences?*

**Nida**: The development of English into an international language is not the result of any linguistic superiority, but is essentailly the outgrowth of the fact that England was the first country in Europe to industrialize. With rich resources in coal and iron England created a navy to command the seas, to plant colonies, and to spread the use of English. This was later followed by the United States, and as a result English is spoken by more people in more different places than any other language. Furthermore, the two percent for British and American publishers may actually represent many more books in proportion to population than in the case of some other countries. In addition, many people in Europe prefer reading books in English, the language in which the author evidently wrote, rather than depend on poor translations that frequently come out much later. The underlying issues are not cultural exclusiveness but economics. Even now in the European Union leaders are beginning to talk about "International English," since this form of communication is the primary medium of interaction among leaders.

**Liao**: *Some people argue that in the* 60*'s you regarded translation as Science, but later on you preferred to consider translation as an Art. Could you comment on this argument?*

**Nida**: I have always tried to distinguish clearly between the study of the translating process which can and should be done in a completely scientific manner and the actual activity of translating, which I have often referred to as essentially a skill or art. One could speak of the act of translating as a technology because it employs a number of cultural and linguistic principles in communication, but the detailed analysis of the results of translating sould be treated in a fully scientific manner in the same way that communication scientists analyze the communication process from start fo finish and evaluate the relations between the intial input and the

final output, as well as the responses of receptors.

**Liao**: *We have radically different theories for natural sciences and for social sciences. Recently people have been applying theories of natural sciences to the study of liberal arts. Do you think it is helpful in studies of translating to apply principles of natural sciences, entropy and fuzzy sets, to name just two.*

**Nida**: In dealing with translation principles and procedure, there should never be any limiatation to the application of scientifc insights and methods. In the study of translation, however, we cannot apply numerical judgments because we seldom can measure differences of meaning or the relations of terms within a semantic domain. The trouble is that almost all sets of related terms are fuzzy, and there is no way to measure the fuzzines.

As an eclectic I refuse to rule out any approach to communication that can provide insight, even if the results are negative. Too often linguists become the slaves of their own systems and they are afraid to look at data that is not already a part of their system. This was the tragedy of Chomsky's initial insights.

**Liao**: *Dr. Nida, you have been lecturing extensively in China and have made friends with many Chinese scholars in translation. Could you tell us your impression about translation and translation studies in China?*

**Nida**: I am very favorably impressed with the quality and productivity of so many students of translation. There are very few training programs in Europe and the Americas that are comparable to the schools in China. In the dedication of students to mastering foreign languages, you are far ahead of most countries in the number of students that take translating seriously, and the qualtiy and quantity of questions that you raise. Your meaningful discussions are outstanding.

I have been disappointed by some of the ultra conservative people who think that translating is only applicable to literary texts and that the way to communicate Chinese culture is to translate literally the classic poems from Chinese into English. But such features of the Chinese intellectual heritage are changing fast. At times I have noted that Chinese students tend to confuse language with the writing system. But these are all minor matters in comparison with the outstanding leadership that young Chinese are demonstrating in a number of parts of the world.

In all my lecturing in more than 90 countries I have never met so many keen-minded teachers and students, who can ask such

penetrating questions. I sincerely hope that a number of Chinese scholoars will become interested in sociolinguistics because you have within China the most significant laboratory for studying linguistic differences between regions and social levels. Experiences in China and with Chinese people have been one of the high points of my life.

# The Correspondence with Professor Zhang Jinghao

January 10, 2000

Dear Dr. Nida,

It was an honor and a pleasure for me to attend your lecture on translation in the Shanghai International Studies University on June 30 last year.

As indicated in my card, I am a literary translator and a professor of translation in the Shanghai University for Science and Technology. I have taught translation for nearly twenty years, written a book on the subject, and translated from English into Chinese classic novels and short stories by a number of great writers, inclucding Jane Austen, O. Henry, and Walter Scott.

You were introduced to Chinese translators, translation theorists and translation teachers in the early 1980s chiefly for your theory of translating as a science and your principle of dynamic equivalence. To be frank, I was all for the latter but disagreed with you as to the former while most theorists and teachers rushed to accept both.

Later I found that a false picture of you had been given to Chinese scholars on the basis of your book *Towards a Science of Translation* (1964). In fact, you began to change your approach to translation as early as in 1974 in your book *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, in which you said, "translating is far more than a science. It is also a skill, and, in the ultimate analysis, fully satisfactory translation is always an art."

In 1998, I read your article *Translation: Possible and Impossible* (1991), in which you said, "We should not attempt to make a science out of translating ..." "Most successful and creative translators have little or no use for theories of translation. In fact, some insist that only those who cannot translate become theorists of translating. In reality, outstanding translators are born, not made ..." I appreciated this article so much that I immediately translated a few passages in it and had both your text and my Chinese version published in the fourth issue of *Shanghai Journal of Translators for Science and Technology* (1998).

In your talk in the Shanghai International Studies University on June 30 last year, you restated these opinions in the above-said

article and went even so far as to say "Translating can be learned but can't be taught".

I think that *Translation: Possible and Impossible* is a good expression of your basic points of view on translating and that it fully agrees with what I know about translating through its practice.

There are a number of people in China who are interested in translation studies. They hold you in high respect and your theories are of much help to them. So I write this letter to you not only for my own sake but also for the sake of people like me. I would appreciate it very much if you would let me know your thoughts on the following few issues:

1. There has actually been a change in your way of viewing translation since the mid-70s. Do you evaluate your change as being small or great?

2. Some theorists insist that there are rules to follow in translation and that they can establish a system of theories called translatology when all these rules, or at least the main rules, are established. Do you think there are really rules to follow in translation and that theories are of much significance to translators in their work?

3. What do you think are the basic factors that a translator must consider in order to do a good job?

4. Machine translation is now widely talked about and much progress has been made in this field indeed. However, machines, including computers and micro-computers, are not intelligent in the real sense of the word. They cannot be more sophisticated than the human brain since they are made by men. Therefore, I think the significance of machine translation is limited and will always be limited. Do you agree with me?

5. Do you have any suggestions to translation learners and teachers?

I would be very grateful to you if you could answer the above questions in detail. I hope that our letters can be published in China so that many more people can benefit from your insights.

Most sincerely Zhang Jinghao

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January 25, 2000

Dear Prof. Zhang,

I was delighted to receive your letter of January 10. I am impressed with your insight about translating, and I agree with what

you have said. It is a pleasure for me to discuss the questions in your letter.

1. My ideas have changed substantially, especially as the result of seeing what is happening in so many schools of translating here in Europe. I myself was too optimistic about the possibility of applying linguistics, sociolinguistics, and semiotics to the issues of translation.

2. Is translating simply the act of transferring the meaning of a text from one language into another or does it depend on some theory of interlingual similarities? In order to analyze and to direct such an activity, a number of specialists in translating have elaborated numerous theories: linguistic, communicative, free, literal, hermeneutic, relevant, skopos, Marxist, transformational and even gender to mention only a few.

But what seems strange is that for the most part the best professional translators and interpreters have little or no use for the various theories on interlingual communication. They regard them as largely a waste of time, especially since most professional translators regularly and consistently violate so many of the rules laid down by the theorists. We do not translate languages, as some theorists suggest, but texts, and obviously, the infinite variety of texts does not contribute to setting up sets of rules to be strictly followed.

What is even more discouraging is the fact that most students in programs of translation find that courses about the theories of interlingual communication are the least helpful of all.

I myself have lectured on theories of translation in dozens of schools and institutes, but frankly I have not been satisfied with the results. For one thing, most people have great *difficulties in applying general principles to particular problems*. I have found that so much more can be accomplished by sitting down with translators and helping them spot problems and test various solutions.

Many people assume that translating requires *considerable training* in linguistics. But this is not true. Some of the most brilliant translators have no training whatsoever in linguistics. Brilliant translators are often surprised at the manner in which creative solutions seem to *pop into their heads*. Such creative translators are the best examples of the fact that interlingual communication is essentially *a special skill that does not neccessarily depend on long years of training*. The process of translating is almost automatic and should be regarded as essentially no different from writing in one's own mother tongue. In many respects creative *trans-*

*lating is like portrait painting and artistic musical performance*. Some outstanding musicians know nothing about the science of harmonics, but they know how to play a piano with incredible skill and new songs and sonatas seem to pop out of them, as though they had been stored for years in some deep recesses of the mind and were finally escaping.

One important reason for skepticism about the need for theories of translation is that some people seem to have a special *gift for interlingual communication, and without* any formal training in interlingual communication they become first-rate translators. They appear to have an exceptional aptitude for effective interlingual communication, and they simply do not need years of training. In fact, it is often said that effective translators are born, not made.

3. Translating is not a matter of language alone

1) Language and culture

A language is always a part of a culture and the meaning of any text refers directly or indirectly to the corresponding culture. Ultimately words only have meaning in terms of the corresponding culture. Without the knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other cultures a translator's perspective of the world is tragically restricted. And it is not surprising that the most serious mistakes in translation are made because of ignorance about the views and values of other cultures. Differences in culture almost automatically mean differences in language. What is excellent for one language-culture does not fit easily into the patterns of other cultures. Language represents the culture because the words refer to the culture, as the beliefs and practices of a society, but the representation is never complete or perfect. Changes in language inevitably tend to lag behind changes in culture, but there are also aspects of culture that are so taken for granted that people simply do not feel the need for terminology to talk about what is completely obvious.

2) Context

Translating is words in context. The real clues to meaning depend on contexts. The context actually provides more meaning than a term being analyzed. Some people believe that knowledge of the true meanings of words depends on knowing the history of their development, but etymology is often quite misleading. Many people also believe that dictionaries are the final authority and depositary of all the words of a language. There are, however, some words that never get into a dictionary. For translators, encyclope-

dias are often much more helpful than dictionaries.

In many instances it is also important to define the meanings of terms on the basis of contrasts and comparisons with the meanings of related words within the same paradigmatic set, for example, talk, whisper, babble, murmur, stutter, sing, hum.

3) Text

Translating means translating the meaning, and the focus of attention for a translator is the texts, because these are the basic and ultimate units that carry meaning. Mistakes in translation can be readily made if a translator has not read an entire text before undertaking to translate a part. For a translator trying to understand a source text the real issue is the source of information to provide an understanding of what is involved. If he or she really understands what a text means, the meaning can usually be rendered in ordinary language, but this often requires both technical knowledge and sensitivity to the needs of the audience. Some knowledge of linguistics may be useful, but linguistics is not indispensable, any more than it is for people who wish to write down their own thoughts. Translators are communicators of texts, not analysts. If a translator fully understands the meaning of a text, the process of translating it is largely automatic. Expert translators, therefore, let the brain do the work.

4. I am keenly interested in studying what computers can do in translating routine texts, given an adequate data base, but as you indicate the human brain is much more sophisticated than any machine. Furthermore, human behavior is not predictable and languages are only feeble attempts to provide a system for intralingual and interlingual communication.

5. My suggestions to translation learners are:

1) Acquire excellent competence in foreign languages.

2) Analyze the meaning of a source text on the basis of concepts rather than the meanings of particular words because the concepts are the units that must form the basis for finding equivalent expressions in the receptor language.

3) Pay close attention to stylistic features of a source text since these reveal the subtle associative (connotative) values being communicated by the author.

4) Translate a text only after having clearly understood its designative and associative meaning.

5) Improve the style of a translation by reading it over aloud (even several times for some texts).

6) Try to translate texts that represent areas in which you have an adequate background knowledge or keen interest.

7) Since translating is essentially a skill, competence increases rapidly with practice.

8) If possible, become an in-house translator of an organization in which there are different teams of translators working in different sets of languages.

9) Gradually formulate your own set of principles and procedures of translating and share these insights with others.

My suggestions to translation teachers are:

1) Have plenty of personal experience in translating so that advice and help to students will be genuine and realistic. Never try to teach a skill in which you yourself are not competent.

2) Go over assigned texts with students and show them how to spot problems and anticipate solutions

3) Texts assigned for translation by students should be about recent events or ideas and should be long enough for students to find most of the answers from the contexts.

4) Spend at least half of each translation session pointing out creative solutions made by students. Unfortunately, too many teachers spend entire class hours finding fault with what students have done. Such a procedure is both frustrating and largely ineffective, because people do not like to remember their mistakes but will remember very positively their successes.

5) From time to time encourage students to work together in groups of three or four on a joint translation.

6) Distinguish clearly between traditional principles and actual practice of translating by studying translations made by professional translators in terms of (1) differences in form and content, (2) evident reasons for such differences, and (3) the validity of the differences in terms of effective communication.

7) Teach students how to analyze and grade each other's translations.

8) Undertake commercial translating. Most people learn much more from the real world than from the academic world. Money is more convincing than grades.

I sincerely look forward to having an opportunity to meet you because I would very much like to discuss with you a number of issues of translation theory and practice. Thank you so much for writing as you have.

Most sincerely Eugene Nida

## *A Letter to Professor Huang Ren*

December 18, 2000

Dear Huang Ren,

I was delighted to receive your letter of December 10 and I will be happy to revise certain statements in the first chapter of Contexts in Translating. Your recommendations are very useful, and they will fit in well.

I really have not significantly changed my theory of interlingual communication, but I have used different terminology at times in order to try to make relevant my approach based on actual usage. I am in full agreement with you concerning the need for sound preparation and background studies.

Just as soon as I get back from a short winter vacation on Jan. 8, I will introduce the changes into the first chapter and send to you a copy. I will also employ the same changes in the text to be printed here.

Most sincerely,

Gene Nida

Gene Nida

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书名：语言与文化　　翻译中的语境
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简介：本书从不同侧面分析了语言与文化的密切联系，并进而从语境角度论述怎样处理翻译中的种种关系和问题。
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